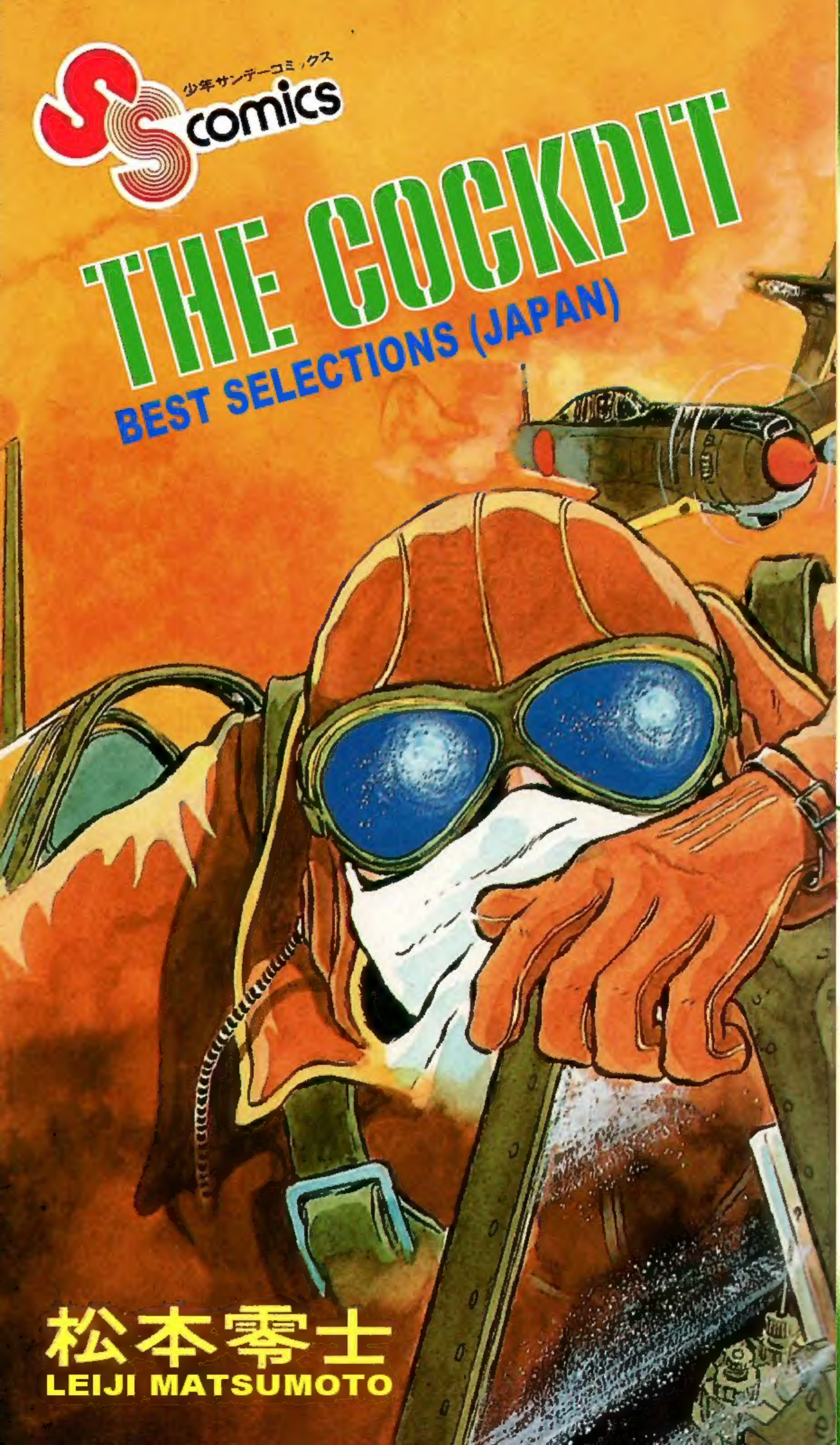
少年サンデーコミックス
Scomics

THE COCKPIT

BEST SELECTIONS (JAPAN)



松本零士
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

Shonen Sunday Comics

NOTICE!

Japanese comics or *manga* are read from right to left across the page instead of left to right. Also, if your reader supports Japanese *manga* format (back to front instead of front to back) then set it so for easier reading. Thanks!

INTRODUCTION

This collection came about because I've often heard that most Western fans don't want to read all of the Japanese stories in Leiji Matsumoto's *The Cockpit* manga series. That of course makes up most of the stories it includes, given that he was a Japanese author creating tales for a Japanese audience. It's a shame too given how good almost all of them are, as those of us who have read them all will tell you. That said it's a common complaint from Westerners and it's understandable. To that end and with this collection I've tried to ease your supposed burden for you. Here in this one volume are ten of the best Japanese-centered tales from the whole of *The Cockpit*. That way you don't have to read them all if you don't want. You can read just these ten and they in turn will give you a good idea of what the rest of them are like. I will caution you that these were picked by Japanese fans of *The Cockpit* and the titles come from several "best of" and "favorite" story lists that I consulted from across the Big Pond. What the Japanese like may not necessarily be what you a Westerner might like. That said I still think this collection will serve its intended purpose. I hope so anyway. These are some of the best of the many Japanese-centered tales that *The Cockpit* has to offer. I'll understand if you chose to stop right here and say, "No more," but I hope you don't. There are so many more waiting to be discovered by you.

Richard Mandel
August 2026

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(PARTS 1 AND 2)

THE AGE OF THE PTERODACTYL

These are stories of men, women, and the machines of war.

YOU KNOW, IN WARTIME THEY TEACH YOU TO SHOOT FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER. THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT IS.

OH, FORGIVE ME. I'M ARTHUR ADAMS TRENTER, A FORMER LIEUTENANT IN HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL AIR FORCE.

I SPENT MOST OF MY TIME HERE IN THE WAR. I ESCAPED DEATH SO MANY TIMES I BEGAN TO LAUGH AT THE THOUGHT, UNTIL THAT DAY ... UNTIL GEORGE DIED ....

ARTHUR, YOU'VE BEEN HIT! ARE YOU SURE YOU CAN MAKE IT BACK ALL RIGHT?

ALREADY ON IT, GEORGE. IT'S NOTHING I CAN'T HANDLE. I'LL HAVE THEM LOOK AT IT WHEN WE GET BACK. BET I CAN STILL OUTRACE ANY JAP OUT THERE, NOT TO MENTION YOU. LAST ONE BACK BUYS THE SCOTCH!

YP D

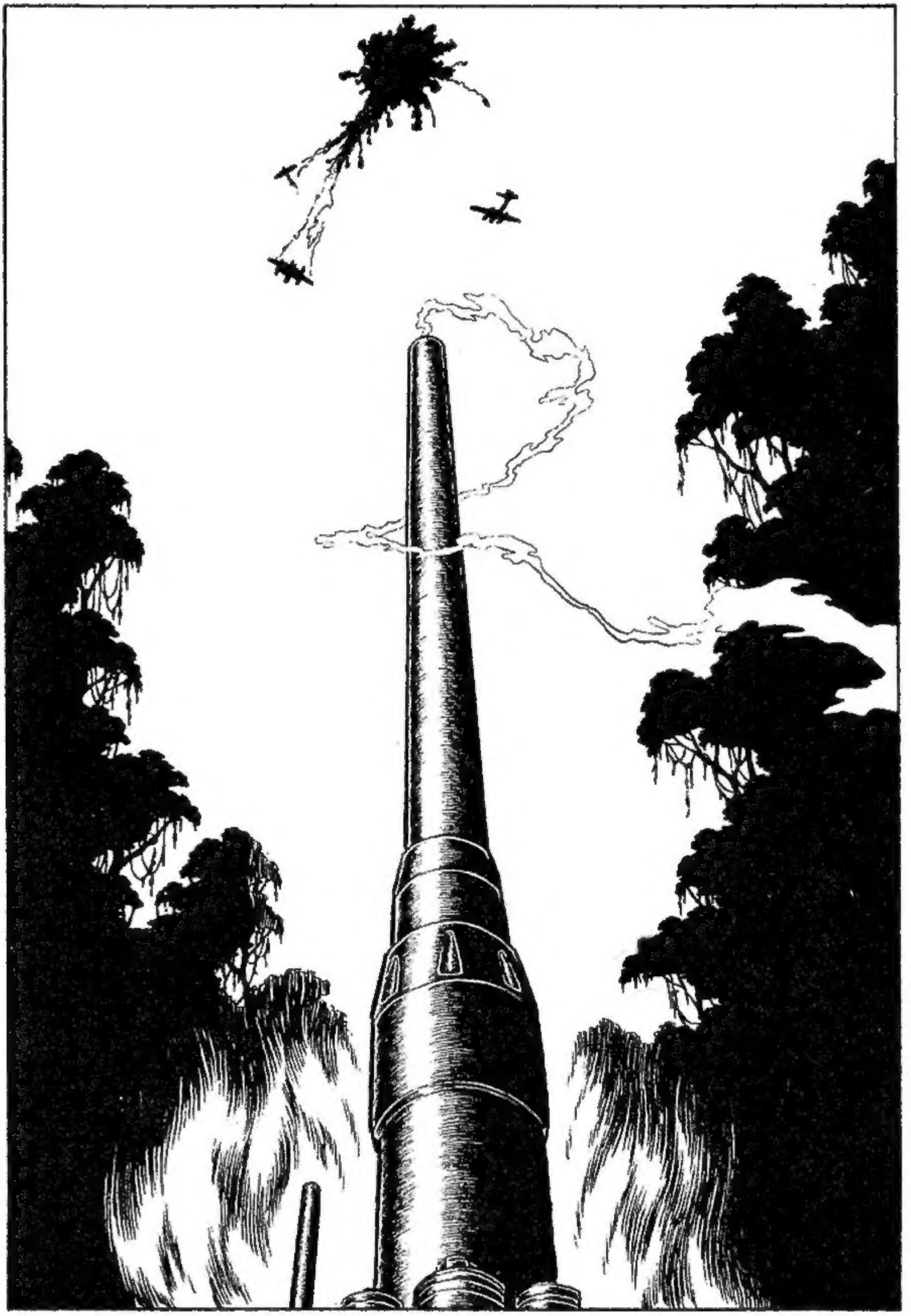
DZ4988

GGGG

88 AT POINT BLANK RANGE

THWAM

DZ 4987



88 AT POINT BLANK RANGE

I WAS IN NORTH AFRICA BACK IN '42. I SAW HOW THE DESERT FOX USED HIS "88S" TO TAKE OUT BOTH PLANES AND TANKS ALIKE!
AND ONLY AN "88" CAN REACH THIS HIGH!
I DON'T KNOW BUT SOMEHOW THEY HAVE, I'M TELLING YOU!
WHERE WOULD THE JAPS GET AN "88," ARTHUR?
GEORGE!!! THAT AN "88!" THAT'S A BLOODY FUCKIN' "88!"
I DON'T KNOW BUT THEY HAVE! HEADQUARTERS HAS GOT TO KNOW ABOUT THIS RIGHT AWAY!
YOU MAY BE RIGHT BUT I DON'T SEE HOW. FROM WHERE AND HOW WOULD THE JAPS GET A GERMAN "88?"
JULY, 1944
15 KM EAST OF KOHIMA ....

THEY'VE GOT A MOUNTED MACHINE GUN.

THE TOMMIES ARE BEHIND THAT ROCK ON THE RIGHT.

THEY'VE GOT A GRENADE LAUNCHER!!

EAT THIS!!

OH *HELL!* THEY'VE GOT AN AMERICAN TANK TOO! RETREAT!!

HEH-HEH-HEH ....

WHAT A MESS! WE USED TO BE AN ENTIRE DIVISION, AND NOW IT'S JUST THE THREE OF US!

JUST YOU, ME, AND YAMASHITA.

HOW MANY OF US ARE LEFT?

PLUS WE GOTTA KNOCK OUT THAT TANK OR THIS RETREAT'S GONNA TURN INTO A ROUT!

THAT WAS CLOSE!

SOMETHING I'VE LEARNED. EACH GUN HAS A DIFFERENT SOUND. KNOWING THAT DIFFERENCE CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE.

IT'S ONE OF OURS!

HEY, THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A BRITISH MACHINE GUN ....

THIS SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF OURS. I'LL BET IT'S A TYPE 99. YOU KNOW? THE ONES THEY MOUNT ON TANKS AND TRUCKS AND SUCH?

WHAT WE HEARD EARLIER WAS A BREN, OR BRITISH TYPE 95. GOOD GUN FOR WHAT IT IS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON FOOT, TANKER?
YOU GUYS HEAD ON. I'VE GOT YOU COVERED.
I'M COMING!
I GOT BLOWN OFF THE TOP WHEN THAT DAMN BRITISH TANK BLEW IT UP!
LUCKY GUY.

I KEEP IT AS CLEAN AS I CAN. THAT WAY IT NEVER JAMS.

THANKS FOR SAVING OUR ASSES BACK THERE. HEY, YOUR GUN IS IN GREAT SHAPE.

I'VE BEEN HELPING COVER THE RETREAT, SAME AS YOU.

BY THE WAY, I'M SUNIYAMA. HOWDY!

OH, IT GETS BETTER. THE BRITS ARE SEALING OFF THE KOKODA CORRIDOR WITH MORTARS. ONCE THEY DO WE'RE TRAPPED.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THAT TANK?

IT'S GOING TO BE NONE IF WE DON'T GET OUR BUTTS IN GEAR.

SO, IT'S JUST US FOUR AGAINST THE BRITISH, EH?

AND I'M . CORPORAL SAKATA.

I'M YAMASHITA.

I'M . PRIVATE ISHIKAWA.

WHADDYA MEAN LOOK AT ... OH, MY ....

HEY! WHAT'S THAT OVER ... UHH ... HEY, SAKATA? LOOK AT THAT!

MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST JOIN THE REST.

WE CAN'T HOLD THEM OFF ALONE.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT? THAT AIN'T NO ORDINARY FIELD GUN!

IT'S A GUN!

I DIDN'T KNOW WE MADE GUNS THAT BIG, EXCEPT ON BATTLESHIPS AND SUCH.

PROBABLY THE SAME WHAT SHOT DOWN THAT PLANE EARLIER.

THAT'S A HEAVY AA GUN!!!

I HOPE THEY HAVE SOME RATIONS.

AND IT'S JUST WHAT WE NEED TO DEAL WITH THAT DAMN BRITISH TANK! LET'S GO!

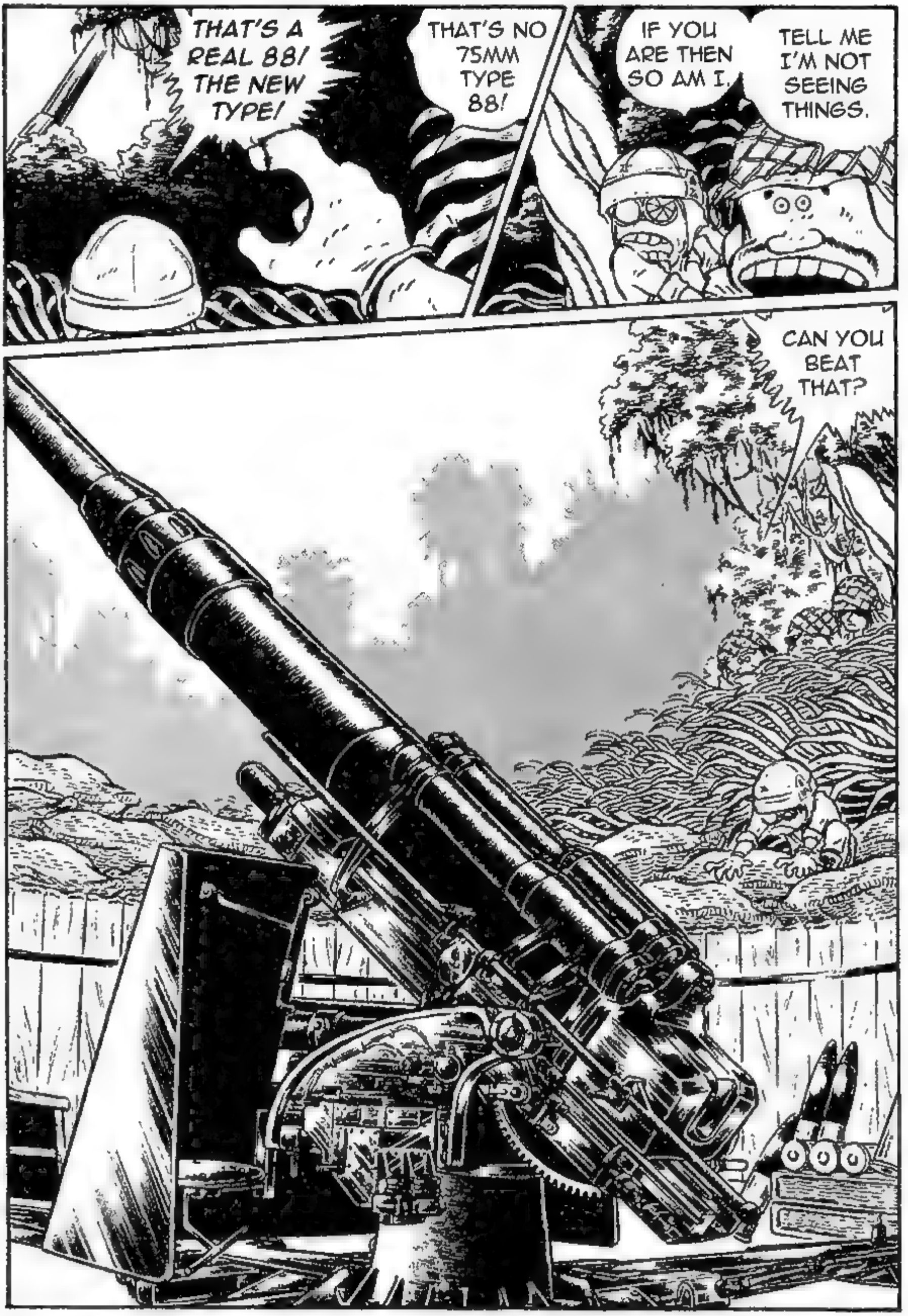
LET'S HOPE THAT GUN CREW'S GOT EXTRA

ME TOO. I RAN OUT BEFORE THAT TANK SHOWED UP.

YOU HEARD THE MAN! WHATEVER YOUR REASON, LET'S GO!

LET'S GO!

88 AT POINT BLANK RANGE



NOTE - MATSUMOTO IS TAKING SOME LIBERTIES IN MAKING THE "NEW TYPE 88" LOOK MORE LIKE THE FAMED GERMAN "88" THAN THE JAPANESE TYPE 99. HE HAD A THING FOR WORLD WAR II GERMAN MILITARY HARDWARE. (WINK)

I WONDER WHAT THEY COULD HAVE BEEN DOING THAT WOULD HAVE GOTTEN ALL OF THEM KILLED?

THEY MUST HAVE GOT MOWED DOWN IN THAT LAST FIREFIGHT.

ALL SHOT UP.

LOOKS LIKE THE GUN CREW'S DEAD.

WHICH MEANS IF ANYTHING SETS IT OFF, THEN GOODBYE ALL OF US.

POOR BASTARDS. I'LL BET THE FUSE ON THAT THING IS STILL LIVE, TOO.

FUCK!!

HOW 'BOUT CLEARIN' THAT JAM UP THERE?

WE'VE GOT TO UNJAM THAT GUN IF WE'RE GOING TO USE IT AGAINST THAT TANK!

FOOD AND MEDICINE, GUYS!!

WELL LOOKIE HERE!

WE NEED SOME WATER TO WASH THIS DOWN!

OH MAN, IS THIS GOOD!

LET'S JUST HOPE IT DOESN'T COME BACK SOON!

HMM ...

WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT TANK WENT?

WHAT'S THAT?

SORRY. I'M THE SON OF A PHARMACIST. I CAN'T HELP IT. I'LL EAT LATER.

SUNIYAMA! QUIT MESSIN' WITH THAT MEDICINE KIT AND DIG IN!

WHATEVER. -NOM- -NOM- -NOM-

HOW 'BOUT I GO GET YOU GUYS SOME WATER? BE RIGHT BACK.

LET'S JUST HOPE THAT TANK DOESN'T FIND THEM -- AND US!

MAN, LOOK AT THAT.

I GOTTA PEE.

IF ONLY WE COULD DO SOMETHING FOR THEM! SOMETHING!!

THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY'VE EATEN IN DAYS.

IF THE GERMANS CAN USE "88S" AGAINST TANKS IN NORTH AFRICA THEN WE CAN DO IT HERE TOO!

UNJAMMING THIS GUN, FOOL! NOW GIMME A HAND!

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU DOING?

I'M BACK WITH THE WATER AND-- HEY! GREAT IDEA, GUYS!

AND SINCE THAT DAMN M4 BLEW UP MY TANK, LET ME HELP YOU BLOW IT UP IN TURN!

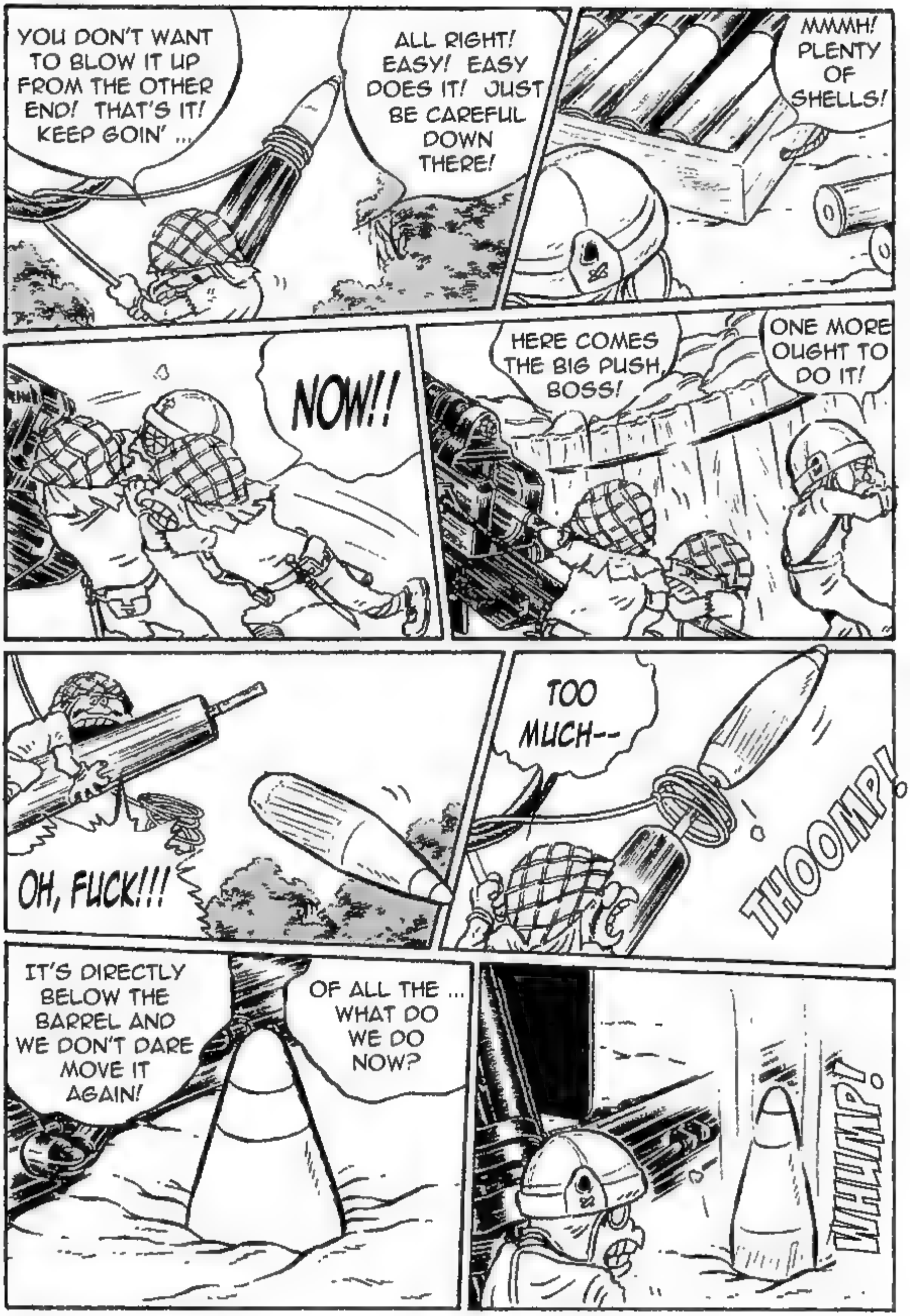
OH COME ON, SAKATA! THIS IS CRAZY! YOU'RE GOING TO GET US ALL KILLED!

WE UNSTICK IT, VERY CAREFULLY, AND THEN LOWER IT DOWN!

AFTER THAT WE SANDBAG IT SO IT CAN'T BE MADE TO GO OFF!

BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT STUCK SHELL, SAKATA?

88 AT POINT BLANK RANGE


YOU DON'T WANT TO BLOW IT UP FROM THE OTHER END! THAT'S IT! KEEP GOIN' ...
ALL RIGHT! EASY! EASY DOES IT! JUST BE CAREFUL DOWN THERE!
MMMH! PLENTY OF SHELLS!
NOW!!
HERE COMES THE BIG PUSH BOSS!
ONE MORE OUGHT TO DO IT!
OH, FUCK!!!
TOO MUCH--
THOOMP!
IT'S DIRECTLY BELOW THE BARREL AND WE DON'T DARE MOVE IT AGAIN!
OF ALL THE ... WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
WHUMP!

I SURE HOPE SO.

YOU GUYS DID A GOOD JOB.

IT'S ABOUT ALL WE CAN DO.

WHAT WE PLANNED IN THE FIRST PLACE. BUILD UP SOME SANDBAGS AROUND IT AND PRAY.

OH, ABSOLUTELY! M4 ARMOR CAN'T STAND UP TO AN "88!"

A LITTLE MORE ... THERE! THAT'S GOT IT! AND YOU'RE SURE THIS WILL TAKE THAT TANK OUT.

EVERYBODY DRINK UP WHILE YOU CAN!

AT LEAST NOW WE HAVE SOME SUPPLIES AND A BIG GUN TO BOOT!

NOW WE WAIT FOR IT TO COME BACK.

AND AS FOR YOU, BRITISH M4 SHERMAN TANK THAT KILLED MY TANK AND MY BUDDIES .... YOU'RE *MINE!*

THE ONCE PROUD JAPANESE ARMY, RETREATING BEFORE A SUPERIOR FOE.

AND SO OUR RETREAT CONTINUES.

HEY SAKATA, AREN'T YOU GOING TO HAVE ANY-THING TO DRINK?

BOTTOMS UP.

SURE. I WAS WAITNG ON THE OTHERS.

THIS IS THE TOUGH PART.

WAITING ... FOR WHAT YOU KNOW IS COMING.

BLAM!!!

IT'S THE TANK!!!

OVER HERE, YOU SHITHEADS!!

OH

NICE SHOT! READY ANO--

HEY, YOU'RE NOT DEAD! IT'S LIKE YOU JUST PASSED OUT! WAKE UP! OSHIKAWA!!

AWWW, SHIT!!!

OSHI-KAWA!!!

HEY ... WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?! SO SLEEPY .. CAN'T HARDLY FOCUS ... CAN'T ...
EVERYONE'S THE SAME! JUST PASSED OUT!
YOU ... SON OF A ....
YOU ... YOU DID THIS, DIDN'T YOU?! THAT MEDICINE ...
... BITCH. SORRY, BUT HE'S MINE.

WE'VE GOT 'EM ON THE RUN NOW! ALWAYS NICE TO HAVE A TANK AROUND!
LET'S MOP UP THE WHOLE BLOODY LOT!

... WHA ... WHERE ...

I'M MAD AS HELL, THAT'S WHAT I AM! FUCKIN' GOGGLE-EYED SUNUVABITCH!!

YOU'RE AT THE REAR, CORPORAL. THAT LITTLE TANKER GUY HAD US DRAG YOU AND THE REST OF YOUR MEN WITH US. SAID YOU WERE BAD OFF.

WHERE AM I, AND HOW THE HELL DID I GET HERE?

HE SLIPPED ALL OF US MICKEYS!

IF I COULD JUST ... !!

SAKATA ... WHAT ... HOW ...

COM- ING. MEDIC!

PILLS IN OUR WATER!

A-HAH!!

WE GIVE THEM TO SOLDIERS WHO HAVE TROUBLE SLEEPING.

LOOK LIKE SLEEPING PILLS, I'D .SAY.

WHAT ARE THESE?

YOU MEAN HE'S BACK THERE ALL ALONE?!

SO THAT'S WHY HE KEPT FOOLING WITH THAT MEDICAL KIT!

"COME INTO MY PARLOR, SAID THE SPIDER TO THE FLY."

THAT'S RIGHT!!! A LITTLE CLOSER NOW ....

THERE'S ONLY ONE OF THEM LEFT! DON'T LET THE ENEMY FRIGHTEN YOU! WE CAN DO THIS! NOW MOVE!!

I KNOW WE SHOULDN'T BE KILLING EACH OTHER BUT THIS IS WAR!

LINE OF RETREATING JAPANESE SOLDIERS, 20 DEGREES, DISTANCE 200 METERS!

... HE'D BETTER HURRY!

WHATEVER HE'S GONNA DO ...

OH SH--!!

KA-POP!

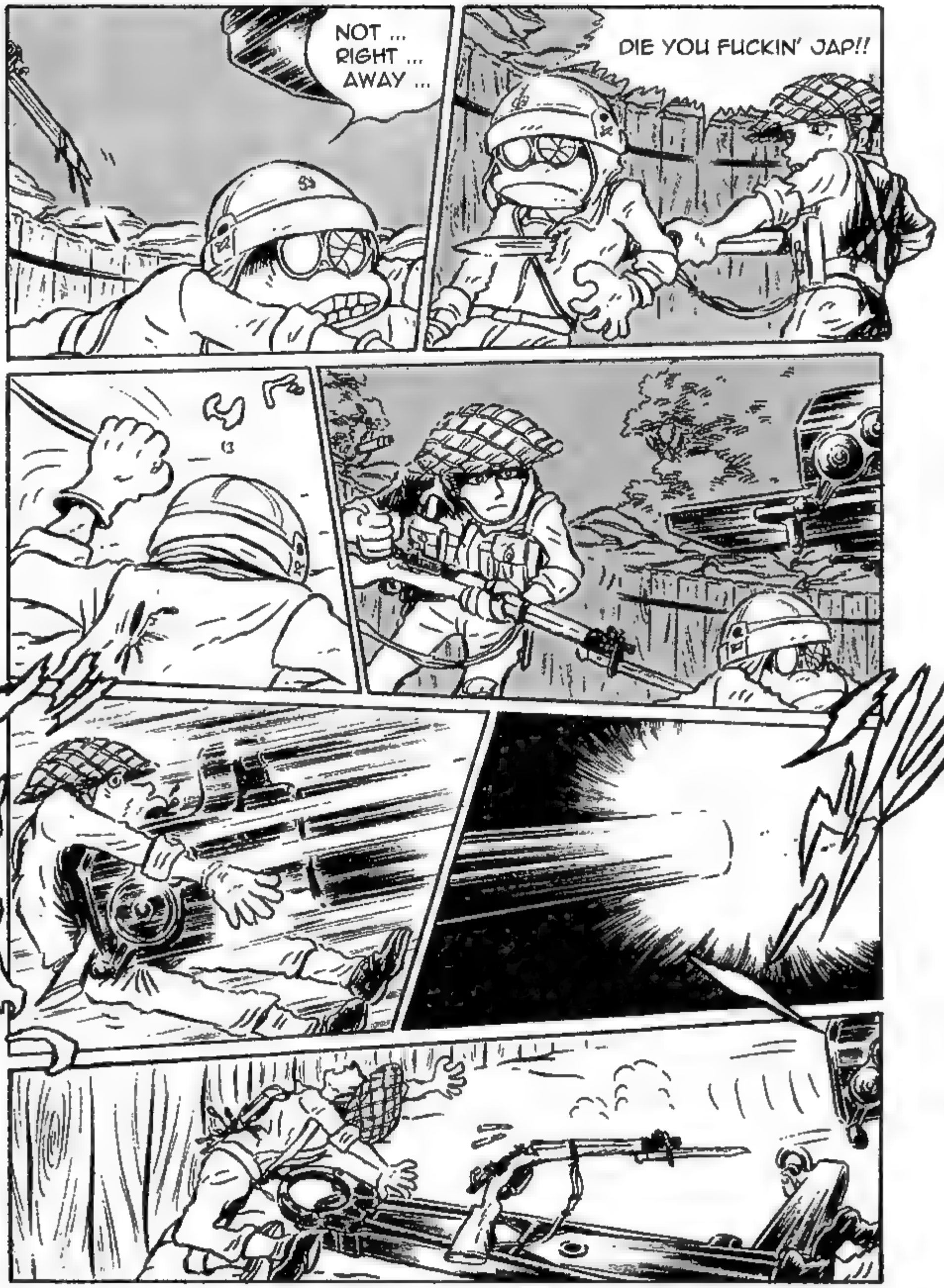
OOOOM

HE GOT IT!!!

SCHOHK!!!

AND NOW ANOTHER FOR GO--

HOW'S THAT, TOMMY ATKINS?!!


NOT ...
RIGHT ...
AWAY ...
DIE YOU FUCKIN' JAP!!

KONK!!
KA-WHAM!!!

THE TYPE 99 88MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN WAS DERIVED FROM THE WORLD WAR I ERA GERMAN SK C-30 AA GUN, WHICH WAS ONE OF THE ANCESTORS OF THE FAMED "88." JAPAN HAD CAPTURED CHINESE OWNED EXAMPLES IN THE 1930S AND STUDIED THEM.

WHILE NOT AS FAMOUS AS ITS GERMAN COUSIN IT WAS NO LESS FEARED BY ALL WHO HAPPENED TO CROSS ITS PATH.

THE JAPANESE TYPE 99 QUICKLY PROVED ITS SUPERIORITY OVER THE LESS POWERFUL TYPE 75. EVENTUALY SOME 914 WERE BUILT.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, NEVER FORGET THAT BOTH GUNS OWED THEIR FAME TO THE BRAVE MEN WHO CREWED THEM.

ONE OF THESE PLACES WAS BURMA, WHERE TYPE 99S HIDDEN IN THE JUNGLES AND MOUNTAIN VALLEYS CAME AS NASTY SURPRISES TO BRITISH AND AMERICAN FORCES.

I AM ARTHUR ADAMS TRENTER, ROYAL AIR FORCE, RETIRED ... AND I STILL LIVE.

THE "88" I KNEW KILLED MY BEST FRIEND. AS FOR YOUR BROTHER'S ... WELL ... I PRAY IT'S A BETTER ONE.

... AND THAT'S HOW I LOST MY FRIEND GEORGE AND HELPED IN THE CLEARING OF BURMA BACK IN MY TIME. ALL BECAUSE OF AN "88."

MY LITTLE BROTHER READ MANGA. IT CALLED "88" TOO.*

JAL

DIFFERENT 88, YOUNG LADY. DIFFERENT TIME, DIFFERENT PLACE.

ENDE

(*) KAORU SHINTANI'S *AREA 88*

<Published in Weekly Shonen Sunday, Issue 8, 1974>

THE IRON TOMBSTONE

THE BATTLES IN NORTH AFRICA IN 1942 WERE VIOLENT AND FIERCE. HUNDREDS OF NAMELESS TANK CREWS FOUGHT AND DUELED IN THE BLOOD AND SAND. SOME WERE VERY GOOD AND BECAME LEGENDS THANKS TO THEIR SKILL AND MACHINES, AND YET EVEN THESE KNEW THE TRUTH AS WELL AS THE LOWEST TANKER: THAT THEIR MACHINES OF IRON AND STEEL MADE FOR MAKING WAR COULD ALSO DOUBLE AS THEIR COFFINS.

JAP TANK HEADING YOUR WAY. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT STANDARD TYPE 97.

RANGE, 300 METERS!

THIS IS THE HERO POINT OBSERVATION POST, SUSSEX RAPID FIRE ARTILLERY REGIMENT.

FIRE!!!

AND THAT'S ANOTHER CAN OF COOKED JAP, SIR! NO RUDDY ARMOR AT ALL!

THE IRON TOMBSTONE

MUST'VE BEEN FOLLOWING IT. HE'S OUT COLD.

SIR, OVER HERE! JAP FOOT SOLDIER!

THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A JAP TOY TANK AND A GERMAN MODEL.

SHOULD WE FINISH HIM OFF, SIR? I MEAN--

JAP SPOTTER PLANE! COVER THAT GUN!! BACK UNDER COVER!!!

HE KEEPS MAKING SLOW CIRCLES.

I'D GIVE ONE OF MY ARSE CHEEKS TO KNOW WHAT HE'S TRYING TO FIND.

PLINK!
PLINK!
PLINK!
IT'S RAINING.
ALL RIGHT, PACK IT ALL UP. WE'RE HEADING BACK IN.
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, JAP.
... UNHHH ... HELP ...
... HEL ... WHA ...

I WAS WALKING ... AND NOW I'M HERE ....

DID ITS AMMO ...? NO ... IT MUST'VE BEEN ... BUT WERE ARE THEY NOW?

... TH-THE TANK! BUT HOW?! THERE ... THERE WASN'T ANY ...

IT'S RAINING AND WHOEVER DID THIS IS LONG GON--

ALRIGHT. STOP. YOU'VE GOT A CONCUSSION. CALM DOWN.

OH SHIT!

PA-KANGNGNG!!!

THERE'S BRITISH EVERYWHERE. AND FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT ...

HEY, BUDDY, YOU ALL RIGHT?! LOOK, I'M REALLY SORRY ABOUT THAT!

... NOT ... AGAIN ...

SURE! NO PROB!

PLEASE DON'T CALL ME "BOY." ANYWAY THANKS FOR THE OFFER.

I'M REALLY SORRY! LOOK, BOY, HERE'S MY HELMET! OOPS. TOO BIG.

... DO I ... LOOK BRITISH? ... ... OOOHH ... AND I THOUGHT I HAD A HEADACHE BEFORE ...

THEY TOLD ME TO GO WITH THAT TANK AND RADIO IN "WHEN WE FOUND IT," ONLY THEY NEVER TOLD US WHAT "IT" WAS. NOT EVEN THE TANK COMMANDER KNEW.

I WAS ON SPECIAL DETAIL AS A FOOT SPOTTER.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING, LYING BACK THERE IN THE MUD LIKE THAT?

YOU KNOW, THEY'RE LOOKIN' FOR SOMETHIN' TOO! GOT SEARCH TEAMS OUT ALL OVER!

JUST BE GLAD I FOUND YOU BEFORE THE BRITISH DID.

SOUNDS ALL HUSH-HUSH AND TOP SECRET TO ME. OH WELL, THAT'S THAT.

OTHER THAN YOU, THAT PLANE, THAT TANK, AND THE BRITS? NO.

HAVE YOU NOTICED ANYTHING THAT'S STRANGE OR UNUSUAL AROUND HERE?

THEN AGAIN, I HAVEN'T BEEN LOOKIN' FOR TROUBLE.

MMMH!

THANKS A LOT.

HAVING A SNACK.

HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

YOU SAID YOU SAW A PLANE?
PTUI! BLERGH! TASTES AS BAD AS IT LOOKS!
I WONDER IF IT WAS TRYING TO FIND WHAT WE WERE.
YEAH, ONE OF OURS. CIRCLED FOR HOURS UNTIL ITS FUEL RAN LOW.
LET'S GET TO COVER IN CASE IT'S THE BRITISH COME BACK!
HEY, I HEAR SOMETHIN'!
A LONE TOMMY. WEIRD.

I HEARD THE BRITISH HAVE GOOD RIFLES.

DIG THAT RIFLE. IT'S A REAL MUSEUM PIECE.

OR MAYBE HE'S LOOKIN' FOR THE SAME THING THE REST OF YOU ARE.

MAYBE HE GOT SEPARATED FROM HIS UNIT. YOU THINK?

WELL, NOT EXACTLY.

LIKE US AND THE ARISAKA?

THE ONLY REASON THAT THE BRITISH KEEP ON USING ENFIELDS IS BECAUSE THEY ALWAYS HAVE!

THE ENFIELD IS SHORT LIKE YOUR TYPE 99 WHICH MAKES BOTH OF 'EM EASIER TO HANDLE THAN MY OLD ARISAKA ...

YOU'VE GOT A MORE MODERN AND SHORTER GUN THAT FIRES A LARGER ROUND THAN MY LONGER AND OLDER ONE. SEE THE DIFFERENCE?

... BUT IT'S GOT THAT WIERD-ASS .303 ROUND THAT DOESN'T WORK WITH ANYTHING ELSE COME TO THINK OF IT, YOU AND I ARE IN THE SAME BOAT.

(+) THEY DID POSTWAR. IT'S KNOWN AS THE KALISNIKOV AK-47 ASSAULT RIFLE

(*) "SMG" – INITIALS FOR THE TERM SUBMACHINE GUN, A MACHINE GUN THAT FIRES PISTOL ROUNDS.

HERE'S ANOTHER LONE BRIT.

THE BEST WE CAN DO RIGHT NOW IS A SMG.*

I'LL TELL YOU ONE THING. IF ANYONE COULD MAKE A GUN LIKE THE GERMAN STG-44 BUT FIRING RIFLE ROUNDS IT WOULD RULE THE WORLD.+

I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

NOW THERE'S A GUN FOR YOU! THE STEN SMG! TOO BAD WE CAN'T STAY TO ADMIRE, BUT WE GOTTA GO SINCE HE'S GOT THAT!

SHIT! HE'S SEEN US!!

'EY YOU BLOKES! 'ALT RIGHT THERE!!

HE'S BEEN SHOT!
HI THERE. SORRY BUT TIME IS SHORT. YOU TWO ARE IN THE TANK CORPS AS OF RIGHT NOW.

IT'S ONE OF OUR OWN, A TYPE 97, AND IT'S BEING CHASED BY A BRITISH M4!

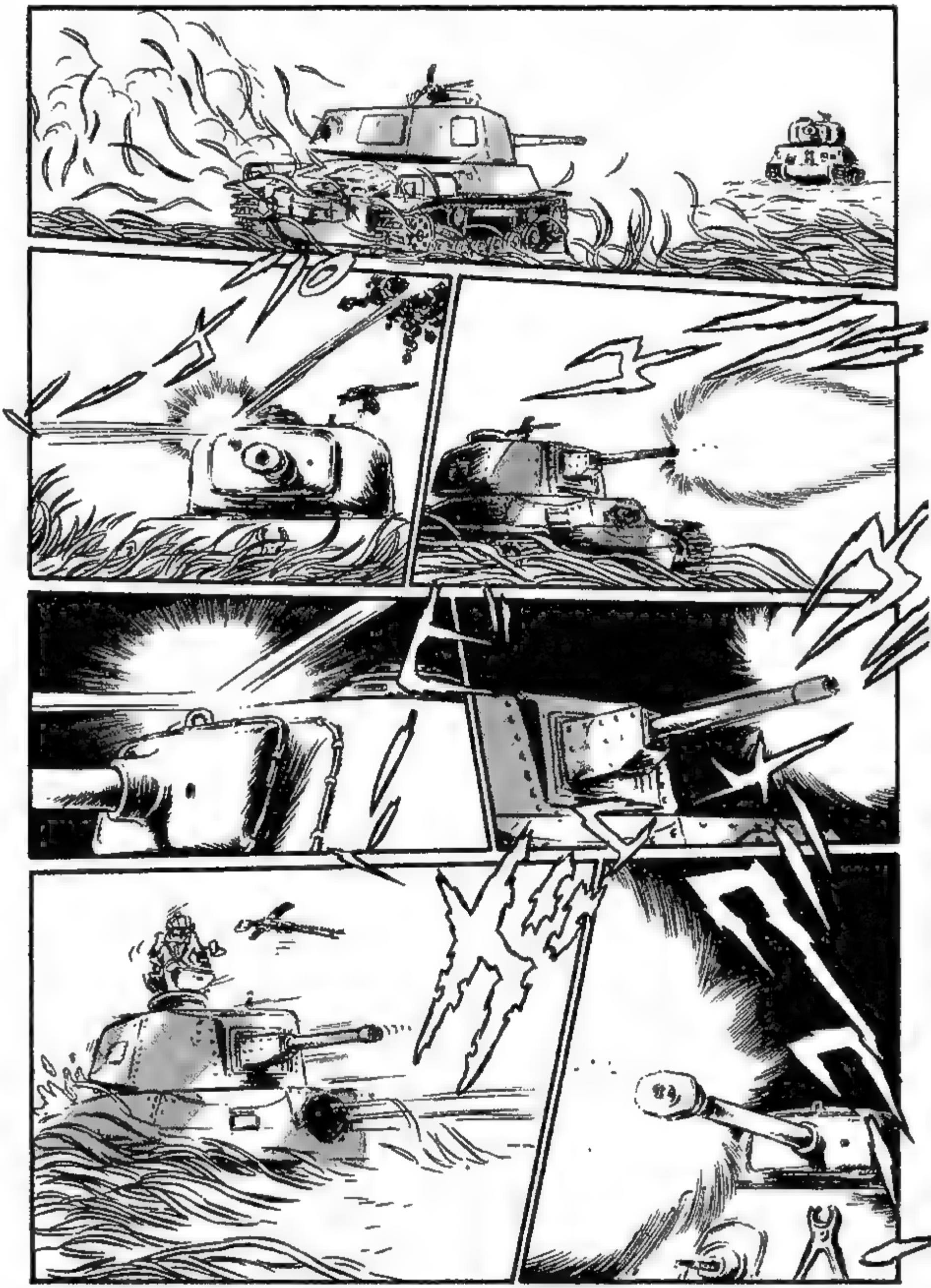
GET DOWN!

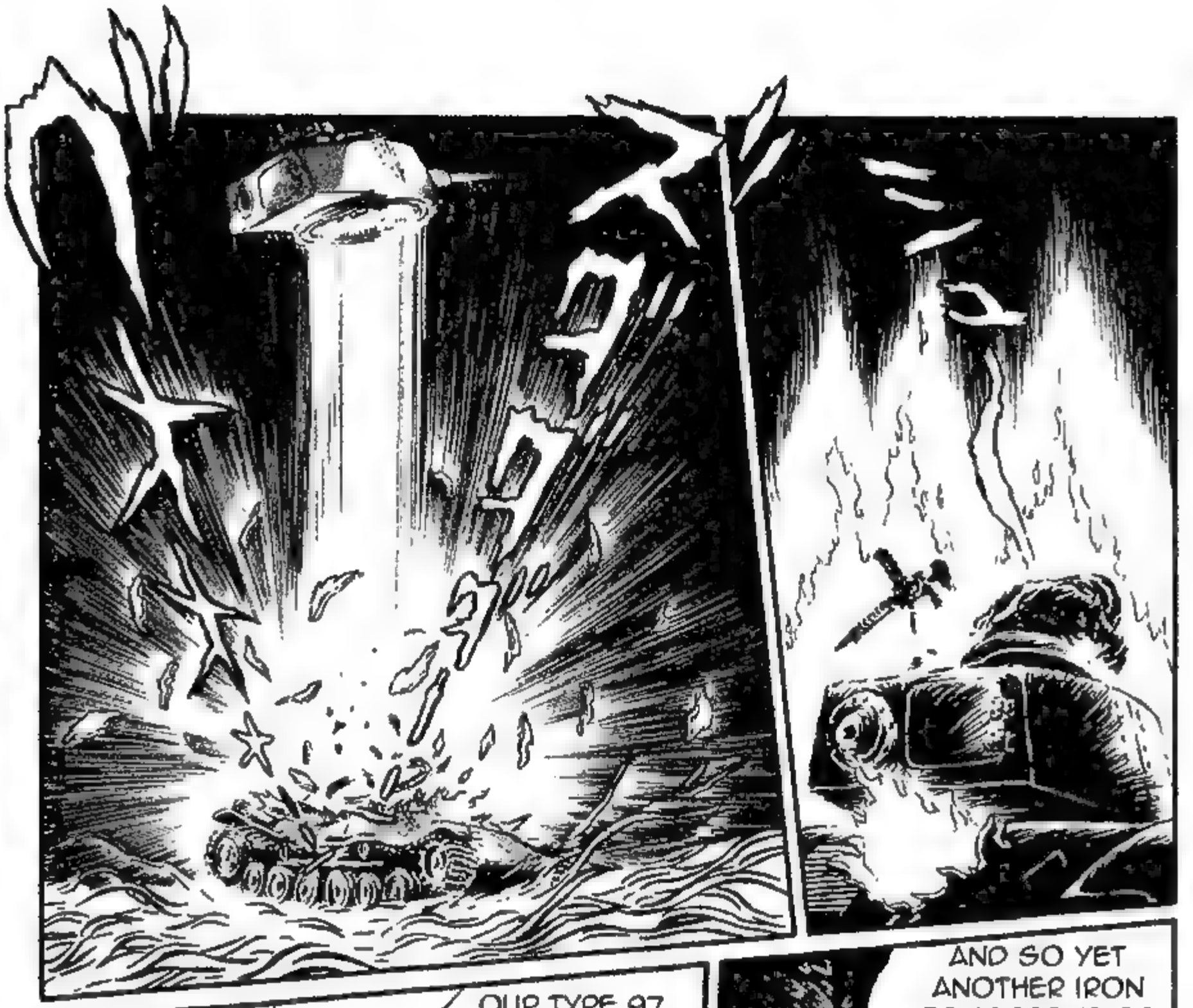
THE ARMOR ON OUR CHI-HAS IS TOO THIN FOR THE STANDARD M4'S 75MM ROUND.

POOR GUY. HE'S GONNA GET BLOWN UP, JUST LIKE THAT OTHER ONE.

NO! HE'S GOING TO TAKE HIM HEAD ON!! YOU FOOL!!!

I'LL GIVE HIM CREDIT FOR MAKING A FIGHTING RETREAT.




GENTLEMEN, THIS IS WHY OUR TANKS ARE CALLED "TOYS."
OUR TYPE 97 HAS THIN ARMOR AND A 47MM GUN. THAT M4 HAD HIM ON EVERYTHING.
AND SO YET ANOTHER IRON TOMBSTONE OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY DECORATES A BATTLEFIELD.
... BUT IT'S GOT NO PROTECTION FOR THE PILOT OR ITS FUEL TANKS!
YEAH. LIKE THE RIESEN*. AS A FIGHTER IT'S SECOND TO NONE ...
I HEAD IT'S BECAUSE WE BUILT EVERYTHING FOR OFFENSE AND DIDN'T THINK ABOUT DEFENSE UNTIL LATER.

(*) "RIESEN" – THE JAPANESE NAME FOR THE MITSUBISHI A6M, ALLIED CODE NAME "ZEKE," ALLIED NICKNAME "ZERO."

OR YOU CAN GO THE OTHER WAY LIKE THE NAVY DID WITH THE *YAMATO* AND THE *MUSASHI*, BOTH SUPER BATTLEWAGONS THAT WOUND UP BEING TOO EXPENSIVE TO RISK.

AND THEN WE HAVE THIS TYPE 100 SMG ... AN ALMOST PERFECT WEAPON ....

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE US TO HAVE A TANK AS GOOD AS THIS GUN?

... OVER AND OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN!!!

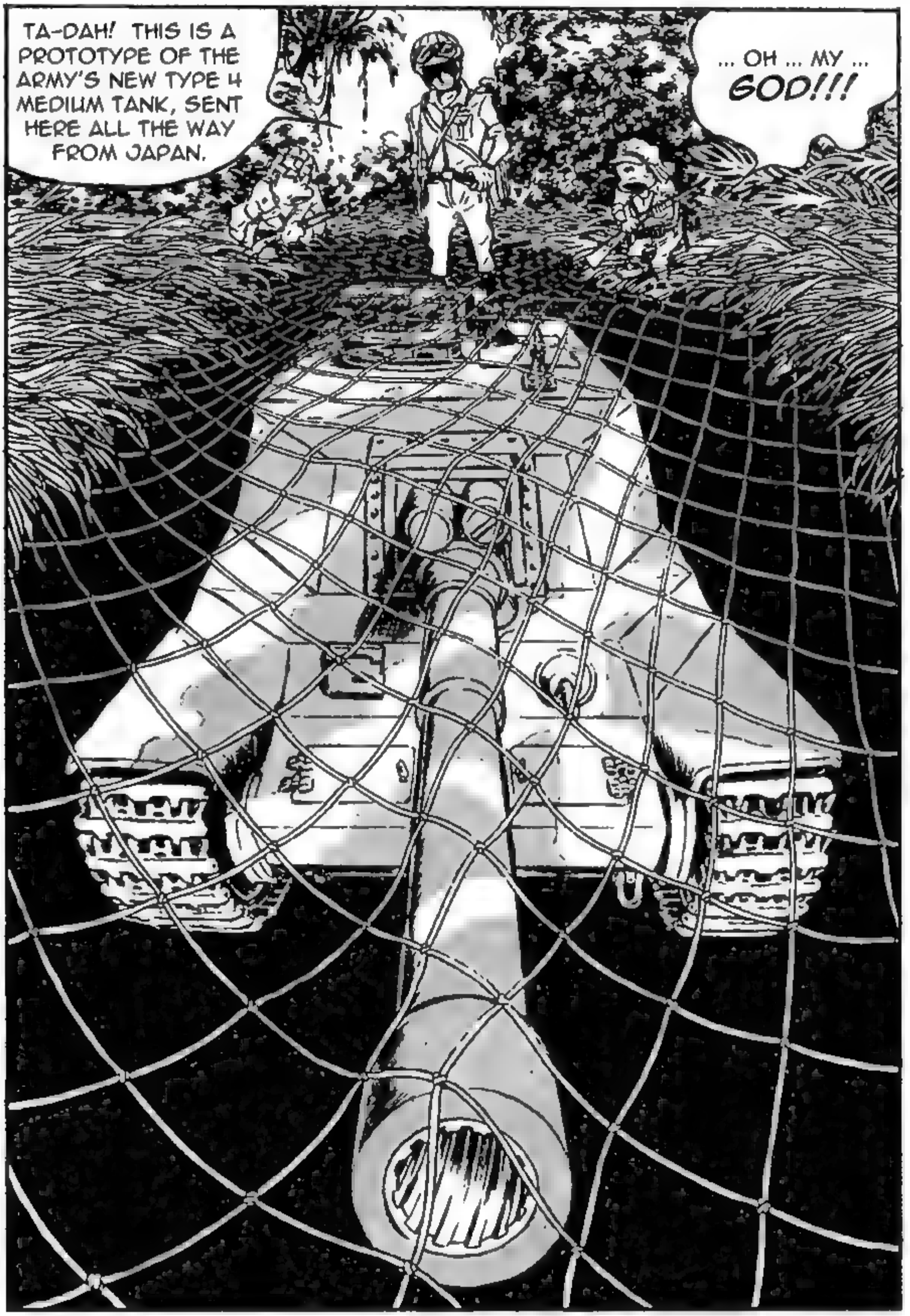
ABSOLUTELY! I'M TIRED OF SEEING OUT LITTLE TIN TANKS GET BLOWN UP ...

IN THAT CASE, GENTLEMEN, FOLLOW ME.

UHH, YEAH. SURE.

TO WHERE YOUR WISH CAN COME TRUE.

WHERE ARE WE GOING, SIR?


TA-DAH! THIS IS A PROTOTYPE OF THE ARMY'S NEW TYPE 4 MEDIUM TANK, SENT HERE ALL THE WAY FROM JAPAN.
... OH ... MY ... GOD!!!

NO SHIT!

THE BRASS SENT IT HERE FOR IN-THE-FIELD TESTING.

THIS ... THIS IS FUCKING IN-CRED-I-BLE!

NOT QUITE, BUT RIGHT IDEA. IT'LL DEFINITELY STOP 75MM SHERMAN M4 SHELLS.

DAMN! THIS IS LIKE BATTLESHIP ARMOR!

HEY! ISN'T THAT A TYPE 90 75MM FIELD GUN?

YOU'VE GOT GOOD EYES, FELLA. IT'S BEEN ADAPTED FOR TANK USE SO AS TO FINALLY PUT US ON AN EVEN FOOTING WITH AMERICAN AND BRITISH TANKS.

WE AREN'T JOKING AROUND WITH THIS.

AND BOTH TOP AND SIDE-MOUNTED TYPE 97 HEAVY MACHINE GUNS TO BOOT. NIIIIIICCE!

GOT NOTHIN' BETTER TO DO!

AND WE'RE THE ONLY TWO YOU COULD FIND IN THIS AREA. I'M GAME.

THAT'S OUR DRIVER UNDER THERE. A GOOD MAN.

YOU'LL BE LOADER AND RADIOMAN. THE YOUNG MAN WILL BE GUNNER.

... THEY GOT WHILE ON THE WAY OVER HERE.

HERE'S WHERE YOU TWO COME IN. I DRAFTED YOU PARTLY BECAUSE THE REST OF MY ORIGINAL CREW DIED FROM CHOLERA ...

I'VE NEVER HAD TO CREW A TANK WITH TWO GREEN ROOKIES EITHER, SO I'D SAY WE'RE EVEN.

BUT I'VE NEVER FIRED ANY KIND OF BIG GUN BEFORE, SIR!

I'M CAPTAIN SHOJI KAMIGATA, IMPERIAL TANK CORPS.

BEFORE WE GET STARTED, LET'S MEET.

FURTHERMORE, I'LL BE TAKING NOTES ON EVERYTHING FOR THE BIG BOYS UP TOP.

GOOD! LET'S GIVE 'EM THE GRAND TOUR, HIRO!

SGT. HIRO HISHE-GAWA, GENTS.

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS SAKATA HIDEKI, SIR.

PRIVATE FUTO ADACHI, SIR.

AND DON'T FORGET TO CHECK YOUR LUGGAGE, HAR-HAR!

ADACHI, YOU'VE GOT THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB: SHOOTING THOSE BASTARDS WHENEVER WE SEE 'EM.

A RADIO THAT CAN RECEIVE BUT NOT SEND. SO MUCH FOR BEING A RADIOMAN.

WE CAN RECEIVE BUT NOT SEND.

OH, THAT REMINDS ME. THE RADIO GOT BUSTED WHEN THIS GOT SHIPPED OVER HERE.

AS YOU CAN SEE, ADACHI, THE SHELLS ARE IN EASY REACH. HIDEKI WILL HELP YOU IF THINGS GO CRAZY.

I WONDER IF IT'LL BE BACK?

THAT PROBABLY EXPLAINS THE AIRPLANE.

THAT'S FAST FOR A TANK!

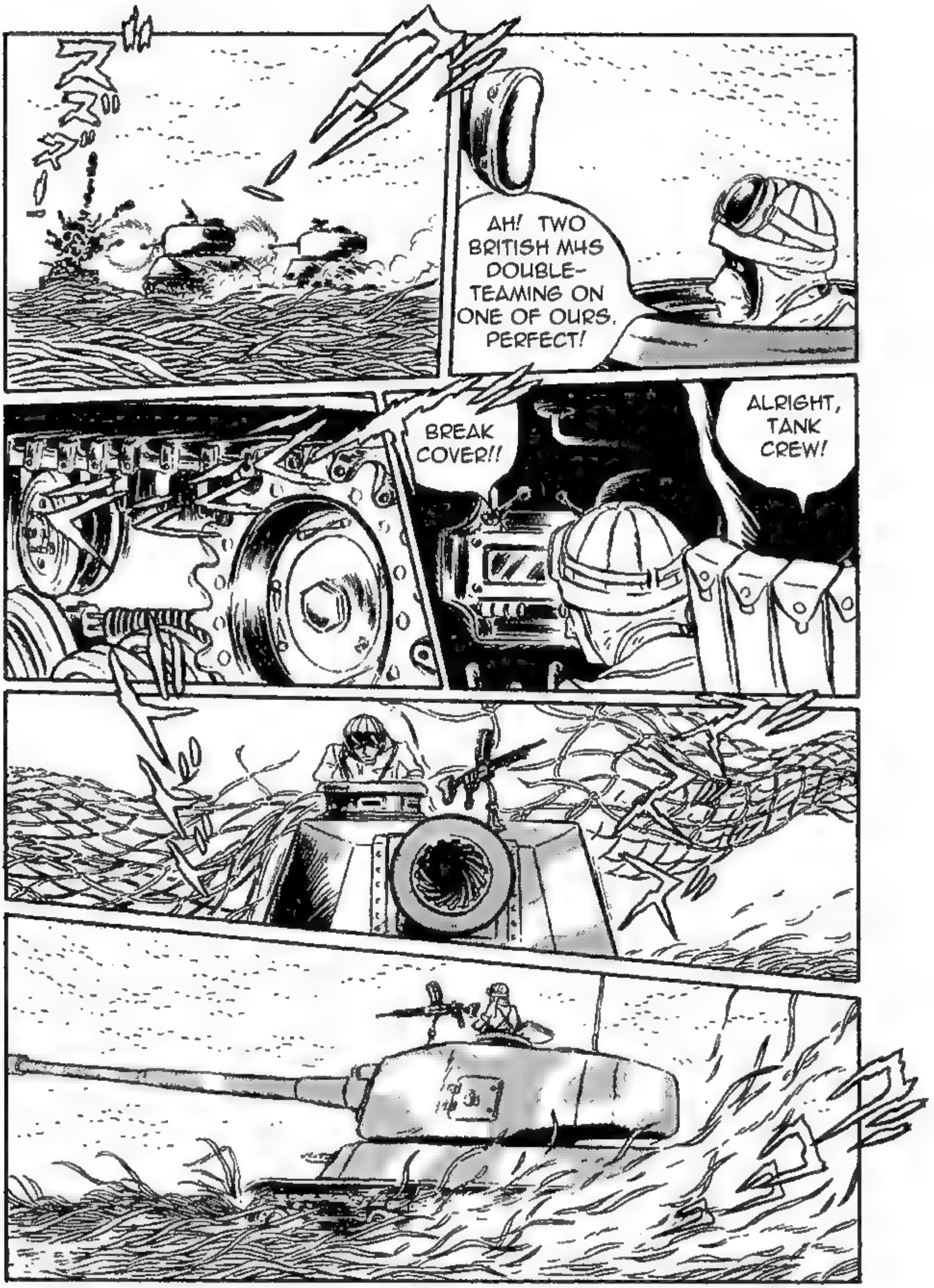
SHE'LL DO 45 KPH IF YOU HAVE THE ROOM TO OPEN HER UP ALL THE WAY.

WE'VE ALSO GOT A BETTER ENGINE THAN A TYPE 97. 400 HORSES, SUPER-CHARGED.

IT CAN DOUBLE AS YOUR COFFIN TOO IF YOU DIE IN HERE.

... SAVE THAT MY HOUSE ISN'T MADE OF IRON AND STEEL AND ARMOR PLATE.

YOU KNOW, THIS ISN'T MUCH BIGGER THAN MY HOUSE BACK HOME ...


AH! TWO BRITISH M4S DOUBLE-TEAMING ON ONE OF OURS. PERFECT!
BREAK COVER!!
ALRIGHT, TANK CREW!

THAT'S THE SIXTH ONE TODAY! IT'D BE BORING IF IT WASN'T SO FUN!

THAT ISN'T A TYPE 97 AND IT'S NOT A TYPE 1 EITHER! IT'S A NEWTYPE!!

WOT TH' 'ELL?!

HEY, UP AND OFF TO THE LEFT! LOOK AT THAT!!

HIRO, BRING US IN CLOSE! LET'S SEE HOW THE ARMOR HOLDS UP!!

I HOPE I'M DOING THIS RIGHT! HERE WE GO!!

ADACHI! SEE IF YOU CAN GET A HIT! MAKE IT AS SOLID AS YOU CAN!

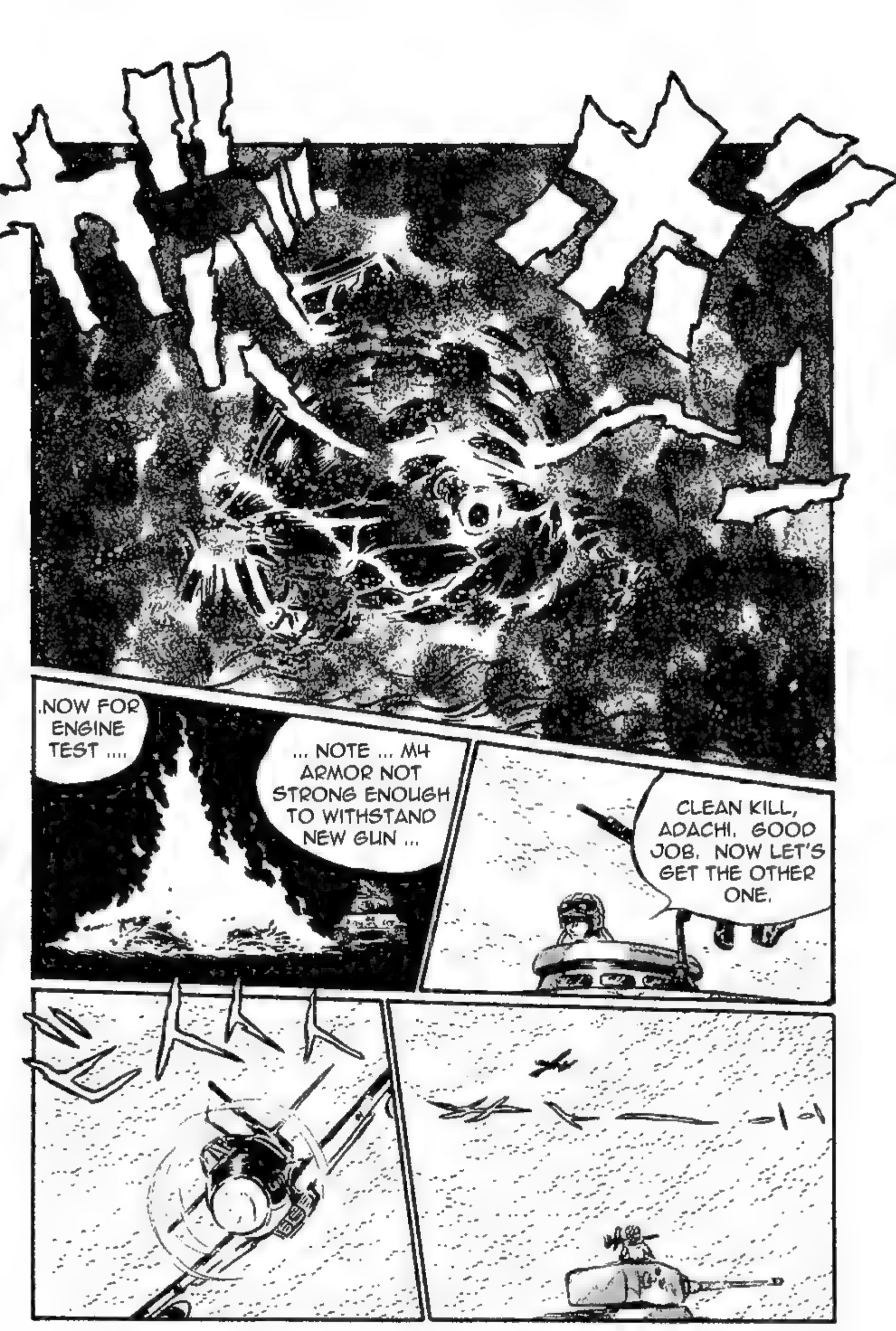
HANG IN THERE, FELLAS AND DON'T WORRY! IT BOUNCED CLEAN OFF!

ADACHI!! MY GRANDMOTHER CAN SHOOT BETTER THAN THAT!!!

BIP!

ONCE MORE ... FIRE!!

THAT'S BETTER! AGAIN!!
DAMN, BUT THAT'S LOUD!


.NOW FOR ENGINE TEST ....
... NOTE ... M4 ARMOR NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO WITHSTAND NEW GUN ...
CLEAN KILL, ADACHI. GOOD JOB. NOW LET'S GET THE OTHER ONE.

IF ONLY THOSE DAMN LONGSHOREMEN HADN'T BUSTED THE RADIO WHILE UNLOADING THIS!!!

IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE CAN MANAGE.

... THERE'S ACTION BELOW BUT I CAN'T SEE A THING ...

DAMN FOG!

HIRO ... NEVER MIND, ADACHI ... DON'T QUIT YOUR DAY JOB.

YES SIR. I'M SORRY, SIR. I NEVER HAVE BEEN A VERY GOOD SHOT BUT YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME TIME TO TELL YOU, SIR.

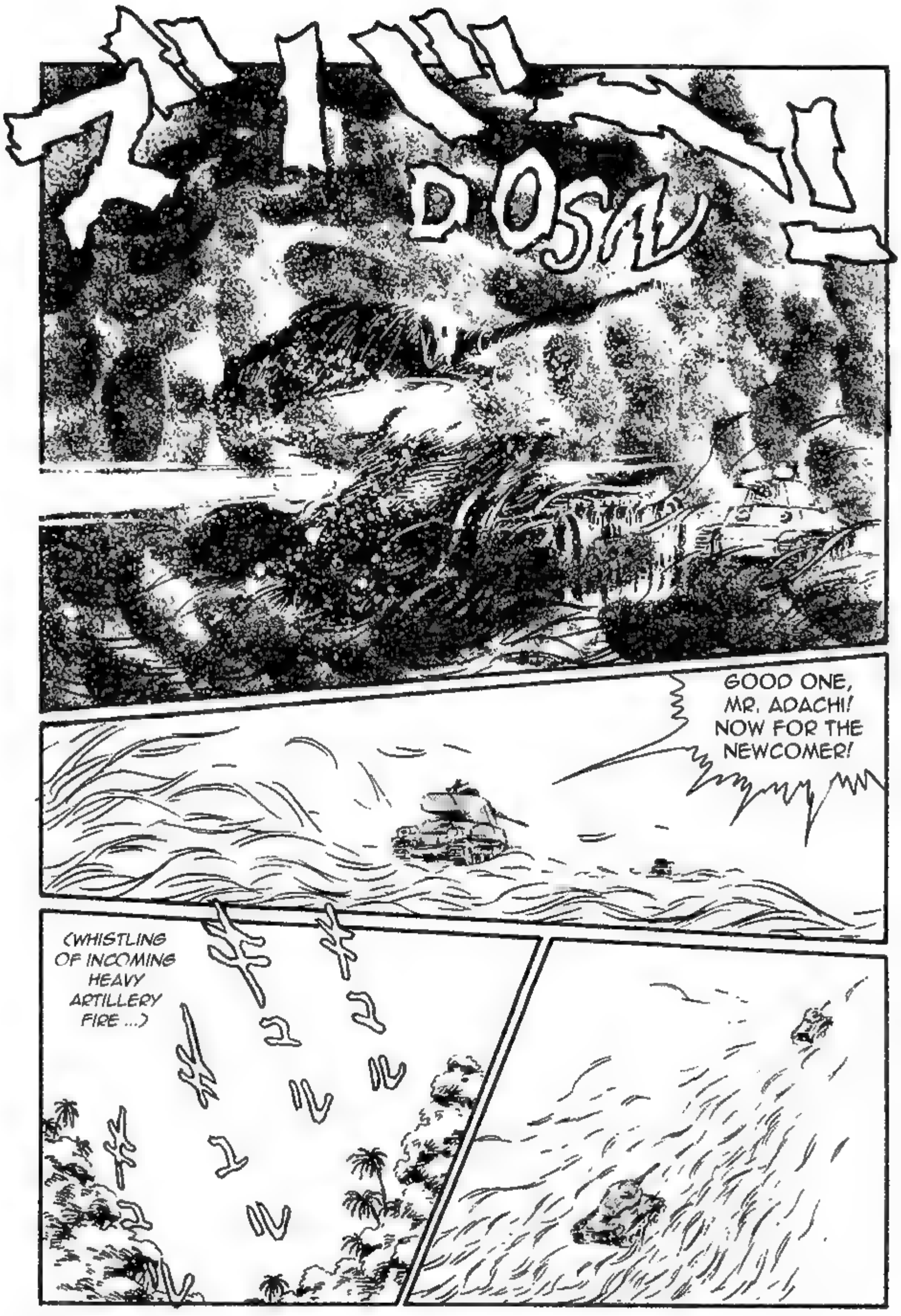
BIT OFF MORE THAN YOU COULD CHEW, EH? DID YOU KNOW WE'RE FASTER THAN YOU TOO?

THANKS .... MAN, LOOK AT HIM RUN!

... NOW THAT YOU'VE GOT A *REAL* OPPONENT?

WHAT'S THE MATTER, TOMMY? NO STOMACH FOR A REAL FIGHT ...

RUN FOR IT! THAT'S SOME KIND OF JAP SUPERTANK CHASING ME!


GOOD ONE, MR. ADACHI! NOW FOR THE NEWCOMER!
(WHISTLING OF INCOMING HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE ...)

FUCK!!! GOOD STOP, HIRO! LITTLE SHIT MUST'VE CALLED IN FIRE SUPPORT! OKAY, LET'S BACKTRACK TO THAT LAST TANK WE TOOK OUT. WE'VE DONE ALL WE CAN HERE.

ALL IN ALL I'D SAY OUR NEW TYPE 4 IS SUPERIOR TO THEIR M4.

... AND ONLY TWO SHELLS WASTED. NOT BAD AT ALL.

LET'S SEE ... TWO ENEMY TANKS DESTROYED, ALL FEATURES TESTED, ONLY MINOR DAMAGE ...

AND YOU HELPED IN THAT, DON'T FORGET.

IF I MAY SAY SO, SIR, THIS IS ONE BAD-ASS TANK.

OUR TEST RESULTS. THIS IS WHAT H.Q. NEEDS FROM US.

WHAT ARE YOU WRITING, SIR?

LET'S SEE NOW ... ONLY MINOR BUCKLING OF TURRET AND BODY ARMOR ...

EVEN IF IT WAS RATHER NOISY WHEN THOSE SHELLS STARTED HITTING.

YEAH, AND BEIN' ABLE TO TAKE OUT THE ENEMY AT WILL WITHOUT WORRYING ABOUT BEING BLOWN UP!

GLAD TO DO IT SIR! I'M JUST HAPPY TO HAVE RODE IN A REAL TANK!

HIRO AND I ARE GRATEFUL TO BOTH OF YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

THEN AGAIN, SOME OF THOSE OTHER THINGS WERE WHAT WE NEEDED AT THE TIME.

YOU KNOW, I WISH WE'D HAVE COME UP WITH THIS SOONER INSTEAD OF OTHER THINGS.

BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU TWO AND THE TANK?

HERE'S OUR SMGS ALONG WITH ALL OF OUR EXTRA AMMO TO HELP YOU ON YOUR WAY, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO CARRY THOSE LONG RIFLES.

ADACHI, HIDEKI, I'M LETTING YOU GO. I NEED YOU TO TAKE MY NOTEBOOK TO OUR BASE DOWN STREAM

DON'T START UNTIL NIGHTFALL. MAKE SURE THE BASE COMMANDER GETS THAT NOTEBOOK. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.

... IN A BLAZE OF GLORY, AND TAKE AS MANY OF THOSE TOMMIES WITH US AS WE CAN.

... SO THE CAP'N AND I HAVE DECIDED TO GO OUT ...

WE CAN'T GET IT OUT OF HERE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED AND WE CAN'T LET THE BRITISH CAPTURE IT ...

I WONDER WHAT HE WROTE ABOUT US.

I WILL?

SIR, I'D LIKE TO STAY WITH YOU. YOU NEED THE HELP AND I'M A GOOD SHOT.

ADACHI WILL DO FINE.

... PRIVATES HIDEKI AND ADACHI WERE VERY HELPFUL AND ARE RECOMMEND FOR PROMO—

Imperial Japanese Army
Type 4 Tank
Field Test Data

I CAN'T HELP IT. I GOTTA KNOW.

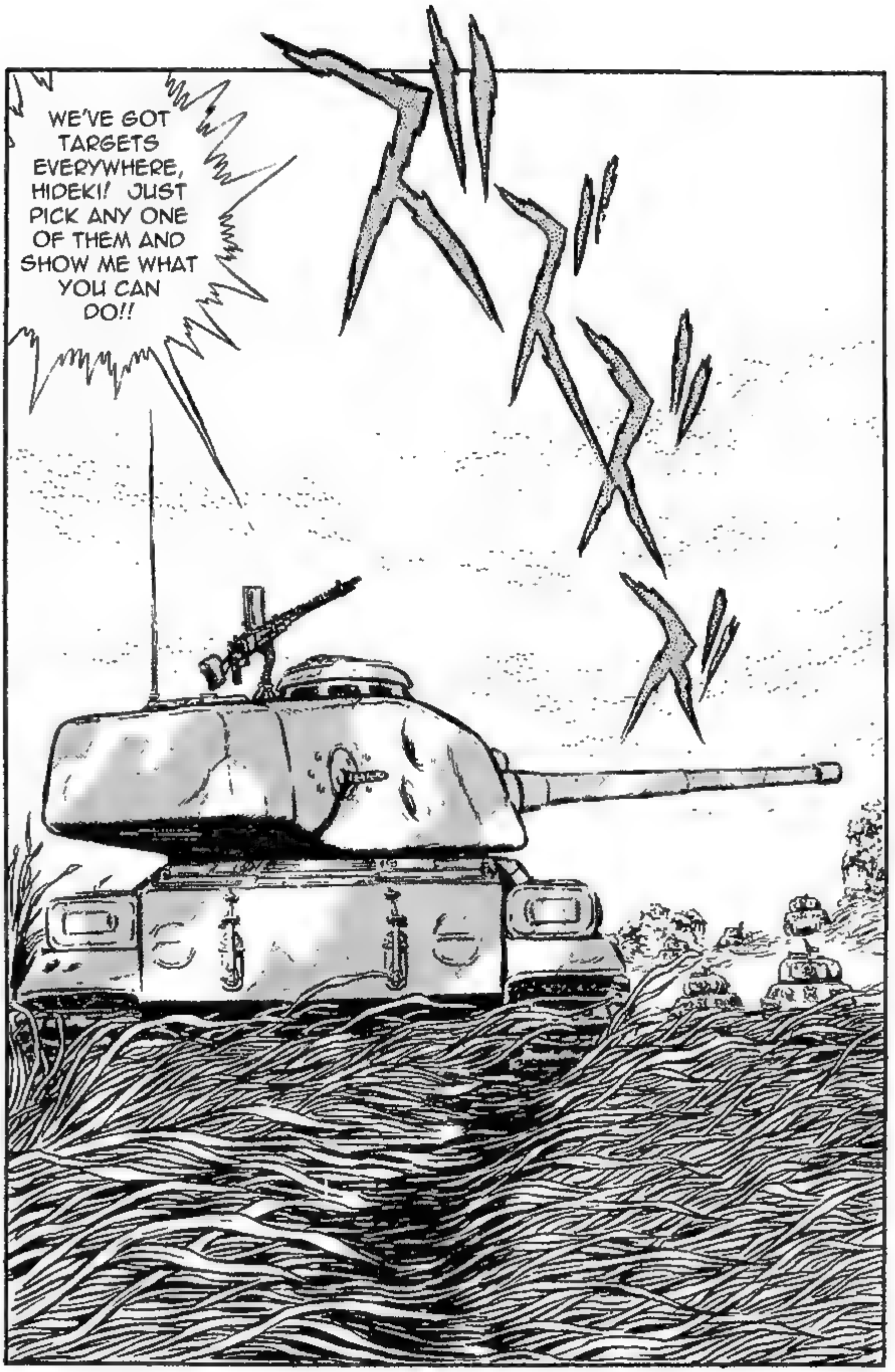
HIDEKI!! WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO TOGETHER!!! HIDEKI!!!!!

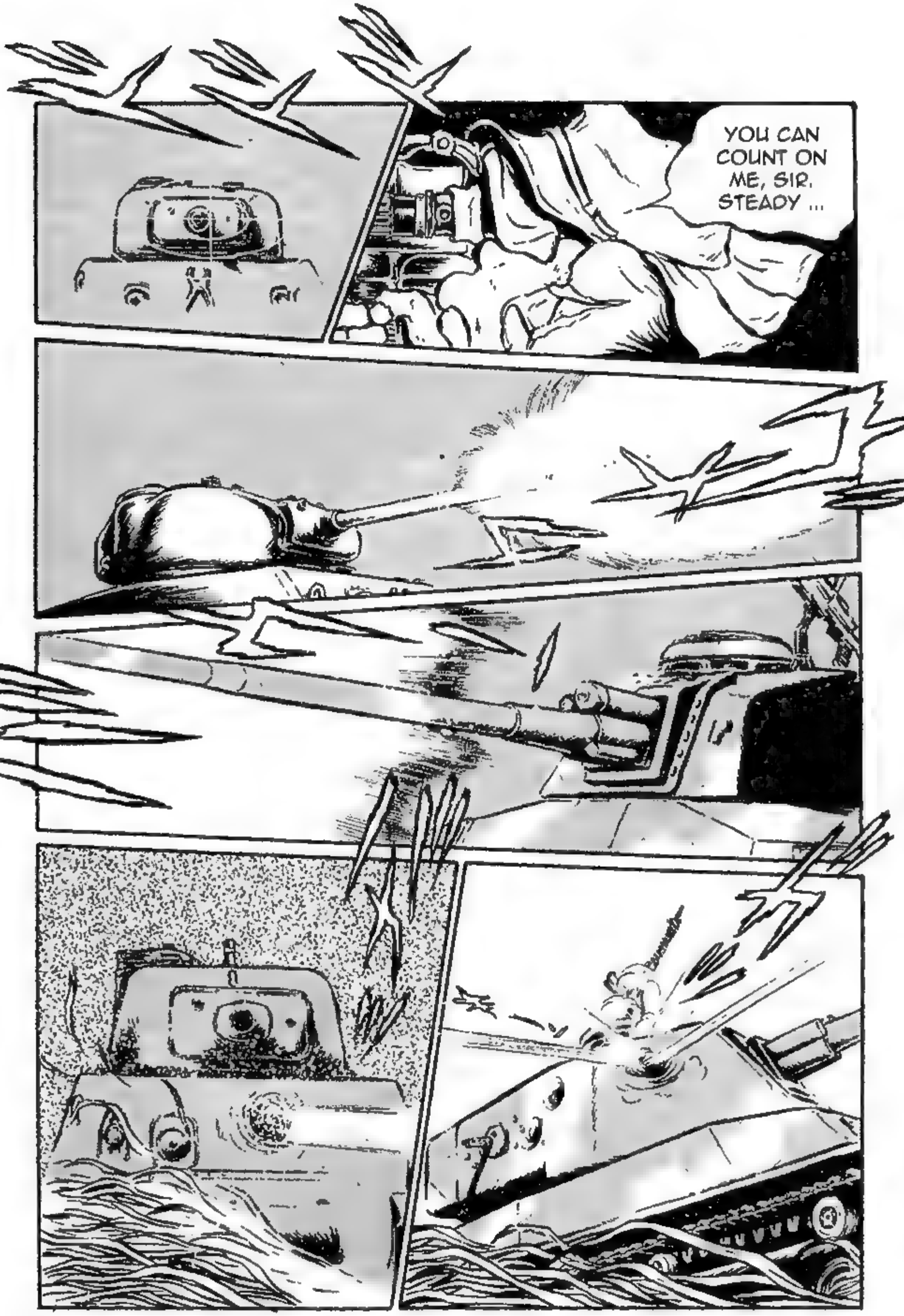
HEY!!!

HOLY FUCKING SHIT!! A WHOLE SWARM OF BRITISH TANKS!! THAT'S WHY THEY LEFT ME BEHIND! GO GET 'EM, GUYS!!!

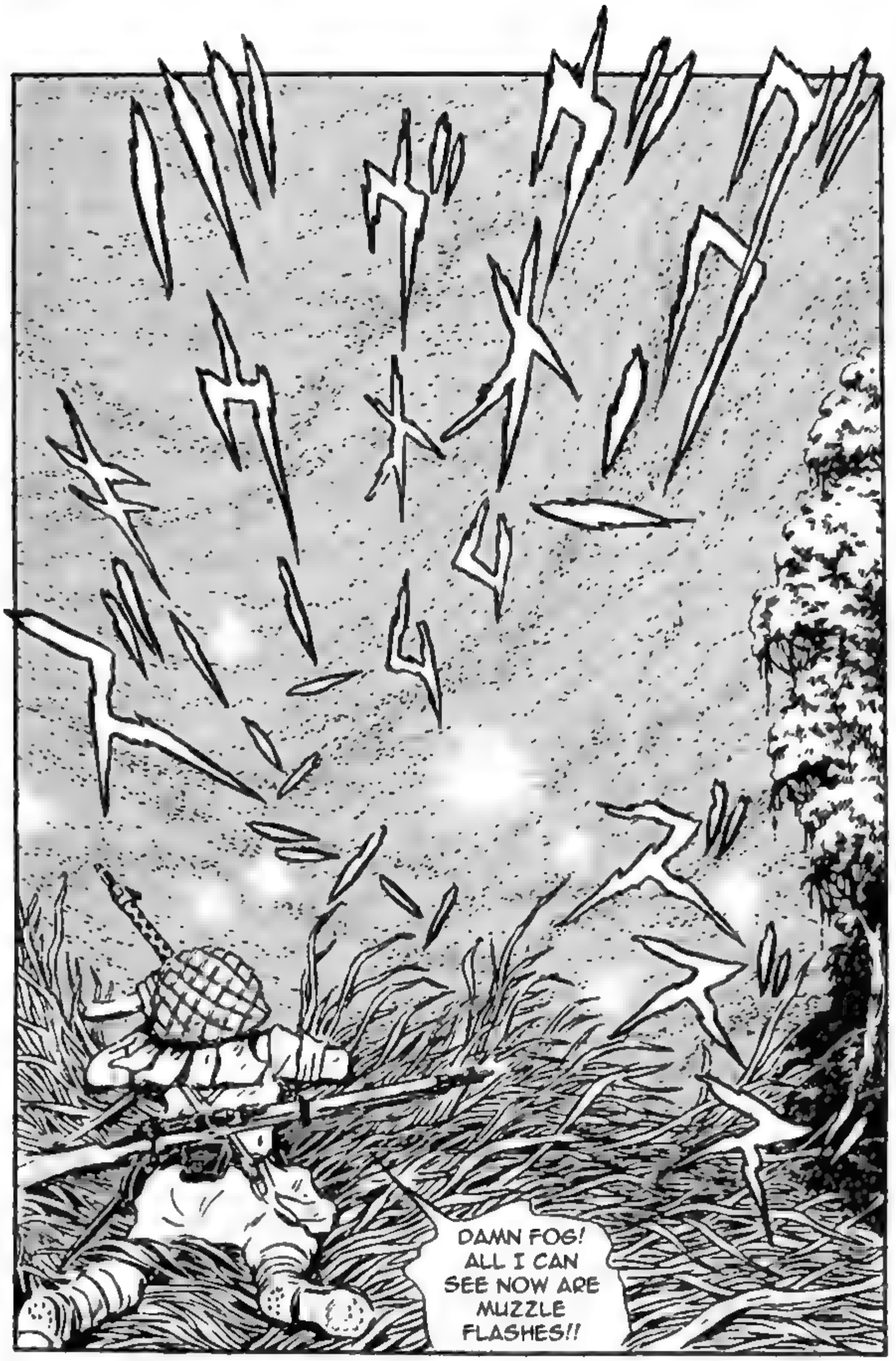
SHOW OFF.

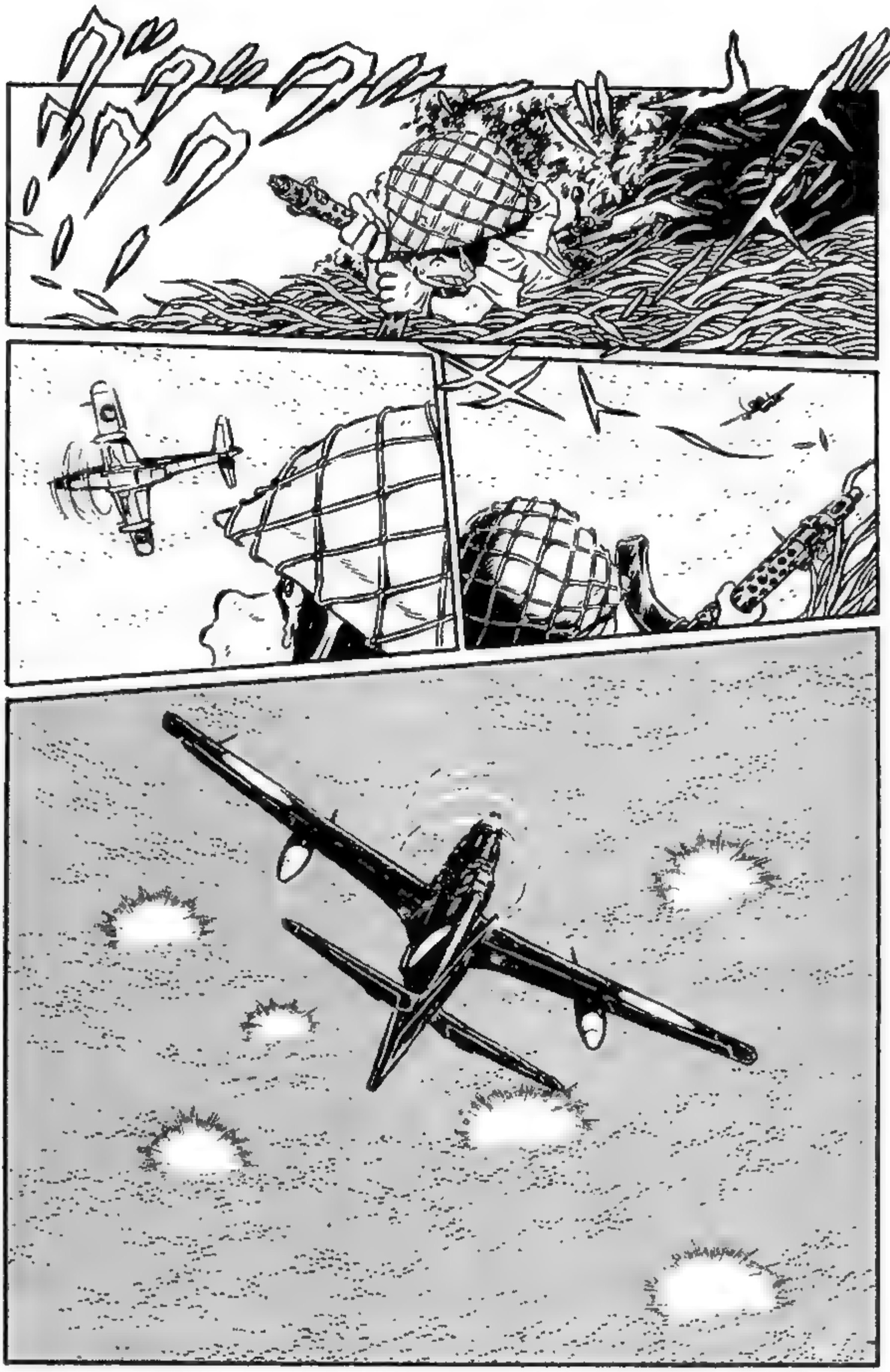
You need to live. Tell them what you've seen.


WE'VE GOT TARGETS EVERYWHERE, HIDEKI! JUST PICK ANY ONE OF THEM AND SHOW ME WHAT YOU CAN DO!!


YOU CAN COUNT ON ME, SIR. STEADY ...

HE HIT IT ON THE FIRST TRY! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!!

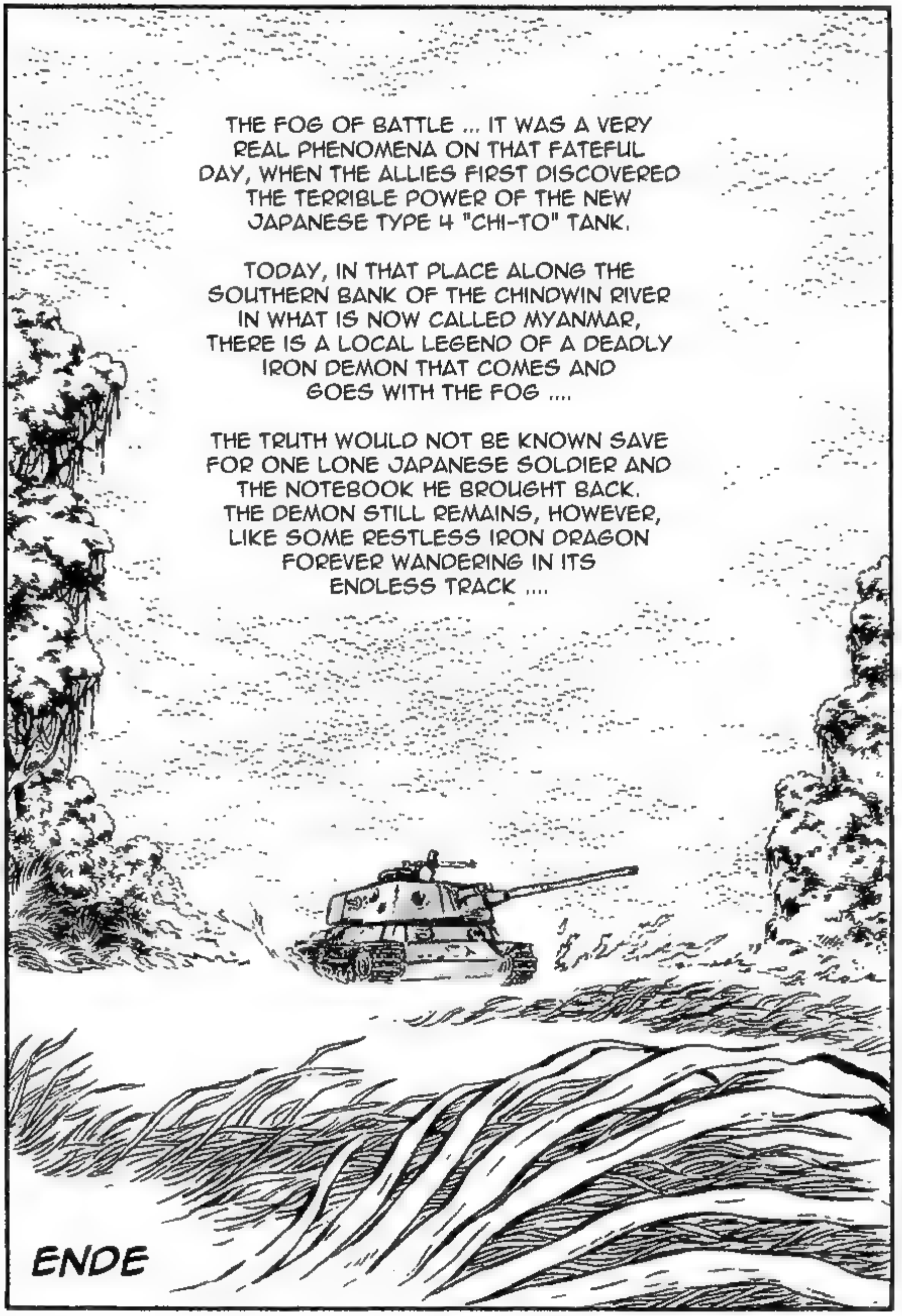

DAMN FOG! ALL I CAN SEE NOW ARE MUZZLE FLASHES!!



RAVEN ONE TO RICE PADDY! THERE IS ONE HELL OF A TANK BATTLE GOING ON BELOW ME, BUT THE FOG'S SO THICK I CAN'T MAKE ANYBODY OUT!

THIS IS RICE PADDY TO RAVEN ONE! RICE PADDY TO RAVEN ONE! HAVE YOU FOUND THEM YET! IS THERE ANY SIGN? CAN YOU SEE ANYTHING FROM UP THERE? ANYTHING AT ALL! OVER!

SIR, I'M CONVINCED THEY'RE DOWN THERE ALONG THE CHINDWIN AND THEY'RE IN THE THICK OF THAT TANK BATTLE, BUT I CAN'T CONFIRM ANYTHING BECAUSE OF THE FOG, OVER!


THE FOG OF BATTLE ... IT WAS A VERY REAL PHENOMENA ON THAT FATEFUL DAY, WHEN THE ALLIES FIRST DISCOVERED THE TERRIBLE POWER OF THE NEW JAPANESE TYPE 4 "CHI-TO" TANK.
TODAY, IN THAT PLACE ALONG THE SOUTHERN BANK OF THE CHINDWIN RIVER IN WHAT IS NOW CALLED MYANMAR, THERE IS A LOCAL LEGEND OF A DEADLY IRON DEMON THAT COMES AND GOES WITH THE FOG ....
THE TRUTH WOULD NOT BE KNOWN SAVE FOR ONE LONE JAPANESE SOLDIER AND THE NOTEBOOK HE BROUGHT BACK. THE DEMON STILL REMAINS, HOWEVER, LIKE SOME RESTLESS IRON DRAGON FOREVER WANDERING IN ITS ENDLESS TRACK ....
ENDE

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 22, 1973>

SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, HUMANS HAVE RANKED AS AMONG THE GREATEST OF THE MANY HUNTER SPECIES ON THIS PLANET.

MANKIND WOULD NOT BE WHERE IT IS TODAY WITHOUT HAVING MASTERED THE SKILLS OF MAKING AND USING WEAPONS. WITH THEM HE HAS KILLED EVEN THE GREATEST ANIMAL SPECIES PAST AND PRESENT.

GUADALCANAL

1944

HE HAS ALSO REFINED THE ART OF MAN HUNTING HIS FELLOW MAN.

THERE IS NO MORE LONELY SOUL THAN THE HUNTER ON THE HUNT.

HIS ONLY COMPANION IS THE PREY HE'S TRYING TO KILL ....

LISTEN UP! THERE'S A BLACK TRIGGER IN YOUR AREA! THAT'S A JAPANESE SNIPER! I WANT HIM TAKEN OUT! CLEAR?

YES SIR!

SORRY, LITTLE ONE, BUT DADDY CAN'T COME HOME RIGHT NOW. HE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF A VERY BIG WAR.

GREEN SNIPER

LITTLE BOWLEGGED FREAK! DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU COULD FIGHT US?

AAAGH!!

AND THE ONLY GOOD NIP IS A DEAD NIP, RIGHT?

THAT'S ONE DEAD NIP.

... LITTLE ONE ... DADDY'S ... NOT ....

HEY, DID YOU HEAR THAT?

I'LL LAY ODDS WE DIDN'T GET 'EM ALL, AND THE ONE WE DIDN'T GET IS THE BLACK TRIGGER!
I'D SWEAR I HEARD A RIFLE BOLT BEING PULLED BACK.
WE GOT 'EM ALL! DON'T WORRY!
LYMAN!!! OHMIGAWD!!!

CRUNCH!!

DID YOU GET HIM? LYMAN, DID YOU GET THE BLACK TRIGGER? OVER!

I GOT THEM ALL FOR YOU.

I ... I WAS JUST TALKING ... TO MY LITTLE ONE ... AND ... AND ...

OH NO ....

P... PR ... PRIVATE ... NORIYAMA ...

... HE'S NOT COMING BACK ...

TH-THANKS. LITTLE ONE ... YOUR DAD ... HE'S ...

LITTLE ONE ....

LITTLE ONE, YOUR DAD IS GONE. I'M SO SORRY.
HE'S GONE.
AWK!!!

LYMAN? IT'S ME, WALKER!! DID YOU GET HIM, LYMAN? WHERE ARE YOU?!

AWWW, SHIT!! LYMAN!!!!

IT WAS THAT BLACK TRIGGER! YOU CAN TELL BY THE WAY HE'S BEEN SHOT!

OH YOU STUPID, STUPID FOOL!

DID YOU KNOW HIM, SIR?

SHE'LL NEVER KNOW HER DADDY NOW. NOT EVER.

HE WAS MY BROTHER-IN LAW. HE HAD TWO GIRLS. THE YOUNGEST IS ONLY A YEAR OLD.

THIS IS THE WORST KIND OF WAR, A SNIPER'S WAR ... AND MAY THE BETTER SNIPER WIN!

YOU BET.

YOU'RE A SNIPER TOO, SIR. ARE YOU GOING TO AVENGE HIM?

I'M GONNA KILL THAT BLACK TRIGGER IF IT'S THE LAST THING I EVER DO!

OVER HERE. WHAT IS IT?

WHERE ARE YOU, NORIYAMA?

WE'VE GOT BIGGER NEWS THAN THAT. OUR ORDERS ARE TO WITHDRAW.

HE GOT CARELESS. HE'S DEAD. DID THAT SPECIAL PACKAGE I ORDERED COME IN?

WHERE'S MATSU?

PRIVATE NORYAMA? WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND YOU.

IT'S COMING FOR US.

TOMORROW NIGHT, A NAVY DESTROYER'S GONNA PULL AS CLOSE TO THE COAST AS IT CAN.

WITHDRAW?! ARE YOU CERTAIN ABOUT THAT?

LOOK, I'M JUST THE MESSENGER, OKAY?

BY "US" I TAKE IT YOU MEAN EVERYBODY ELSE, RIGHT? THAT MY ORDERS ARE TO STAY BEHIND AND COVER EVERYONE ELSE'S ESCAPE, RIGHT?

THE BOTH OF US FEEL THE SAME. THAT'S WHY WE VOLUNTEERED TO STAY, SO YOU WOULDN'T DIE ALONE.

I'D RATHER LIVE FOR MY COUNTRY THAN DIE FOR IT.

SO YOU'RE THE BLACK TRIGGER! WE'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU.

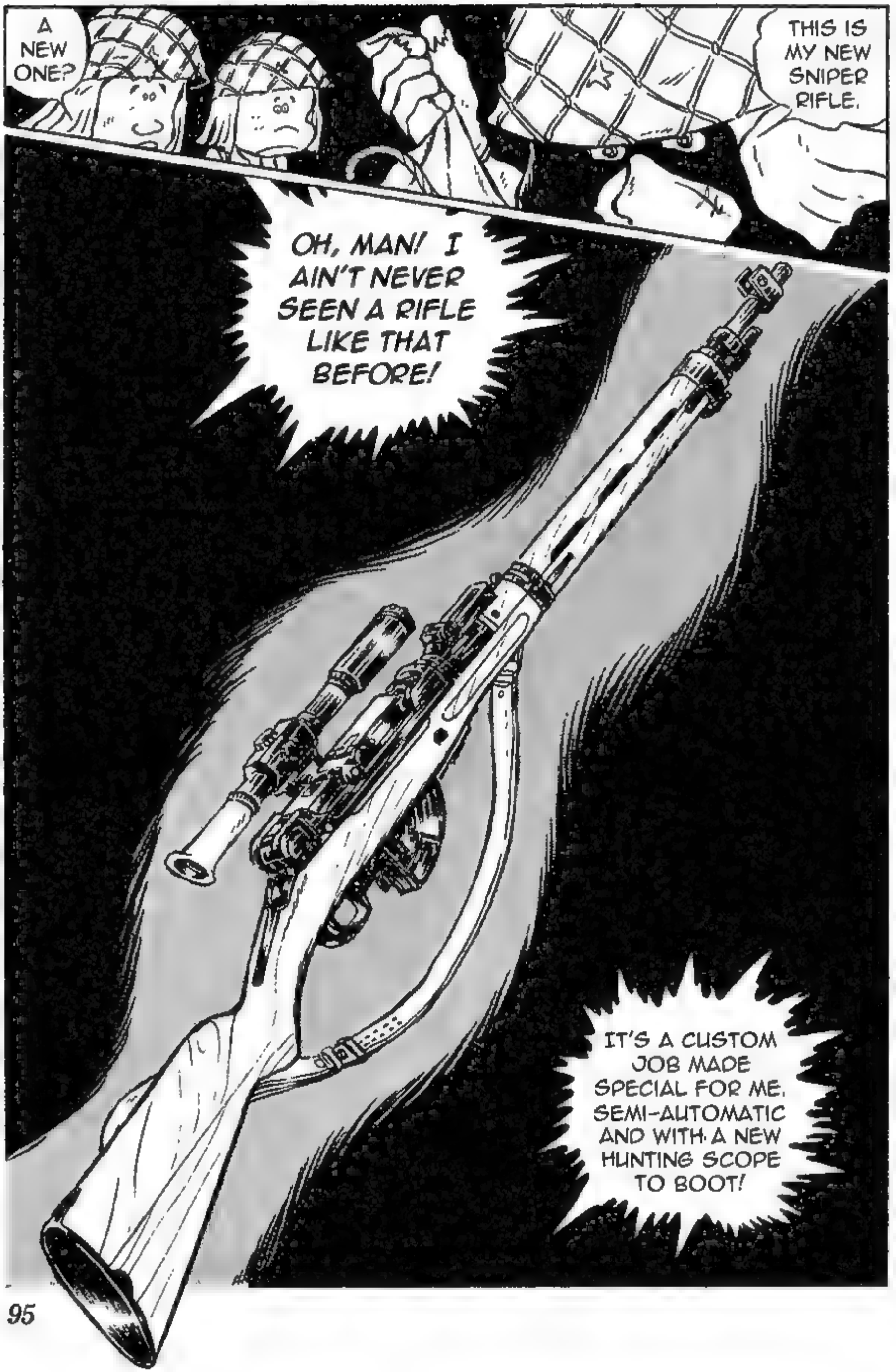
I'M PRIVATE KYUOSHO. THIS IS PRIVATE YAMAKOSHI. PLEASED TO MEET YOU!

NO! WE WERE BOTH ORDERED TO MAKE SURE WE GAVE IT TO YOU DIRECTLY AND NOT TO MESS WITH IT!

AT LAST! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?

WE DON'T. OH! HERE'S YOUR PACKAGE.

I HOPE NEITHER OF YOU HAVE A FAMILY LIKE MATSU.


A NEW ONE?
THIS IS MY NEW SNIPER RIFLE.
OH, MAN! I AIN'T NEVER SEEN A RIFLE LIKE THAT BEFORE!
IT'S A CUSTOM JOB MADE SPECIAL FOR ME. SEMI-AUTOMATIC AND WITH A NEW HUNTING SCOPE TO BOOT!

FAR BETTER THAN THE ONE MY OLD RIFLE HAS!
WHAT A SCOPE!
... SO I CAN HIT TARGETS FROM FARTHER AWAY.
IT ALSO'S FITTED FOR A LARGER AND HEAVER SHELL WITH GREATER RANGE ...
THIS IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN MY OLD ARMY ISSUE ARISAKA!

I'LL BET, USING A SINGLE-SHOT, BOLT ACTION TYPE 38 UP UNTIL NOW.

THIS IS GOING TO TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO.

THEY DON'T MAKE CUSTOM RIFLES FOR US PEASANTS. *SIGH*

YOU KNOW, THAT'S THE VERY FIRST SEMI-AUTO SNIPER RIFLE I'VE EVER SEEN. WHAT A GUN!

YOU ... YOU'RE GIVING ME YOUR OLD RIFLE? AW GEEZ, THANKS! I'LL DO MY BEST TO HONOR THIS GIFT!

GET DOWN AND SHUT UP! THAT WAS AN ENEMY SNIPER, AND FROM WHAT I JUST SAW HE'S AT LEAST AS GOOD AS I AM!

YAMAKOSH!!

... GYA ... GAH ... ... GH ...

SHIT! THAT'S ENOUGH!!

AHHH, THERE YOU ARE!

YEAH! HE'S PROBABLY AS GOOD AS I AM! WE'D BETTER LAY LOW AND COME UP WITH A NEW PLAN!

GODDAMN, WALKER, THAT WAS CLOSE! TOO CLOSE!!

THWACK!!

I HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO SET THE SIGHTS ON THIS NEW GUN.

YOU MISSED HIM! A SNIPER AS GOOD AS YOU, AND YOU MISSED HIM!

I DON'T GET IT. HE HAD ME DEAD TO RIGHTS. HE SHOULD HAVE NAILED ME, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO QUESTION MY LUCK. WHAT NOW, FRIEND?

IF I HAD BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO TAKE A FEW TEST SHOTS AND SET THE SIGHTS ON THIS NEW GUN, THEN OUR FRIEND OVER THERE WOULD BE DEAD BY NOW.

YOU SEE, SNIPERS AND THEIR GUNS HAVE TO BE IN TUNE WITH EACH OTHER, AND THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET.

I'M SCARED. ISN'T THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT THIS?

EVERY SNIPER AND EVERY GUN THEY USE HAVE THEIR LITTLE QUIRKS. ONCE YOU GET THE TWO IN TUNE THEN YOU'VE GOT AN UNBEATABLE PAIR.

I DON'T WANT TO GO! I'M ALONE NOW! I'LL STAY WITH YOU, OKAY?

NO! I ... I CAN'T!

'FRAID NOT, 'CAUSE HE'S NOT GOING TO LET ME. LOOK, I DON'T NEED YOU. YOU CAN HEAD FOR THE COAST IF YOU WANT.

FROM HERE TO CAPE MAMIMBO! THIRTY KILOMETERS ROAD'S WORTH OF NOTHING BUT BODIES! DEAD BODIES, ROTTING BODIES, SKELETON BODIES, AND ALL OF OUR MEN! EVERYWHERE! DON'T MAKE ME WALK THAT ROAD AGAIN! PLEASE!!!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE SAW ON OUR WAY HERE? DEAD MEN ALL OVER!

THE ENGINEER WHO MADE THIS GUN FOR ME ... IS HE NOW ONE OF THOSE BODIES TOO? MY FOE OUT THERE ... HAS IT OCCURRED TO HIM HE MIGHT DIE THE SAME WAY, HIS RIFLE CLUTCHED IN HIS BLOODY HANDS?
I'LL GO MAD IF I HAVE TO WALK THAT ROAD AGAIN.

WELL, THAT'S THAT. TIME TO GET BACK TO THE WAR.

THIS IS THE FUN PART. THE WAITING GAME, SEEING WHO SCREWS UP FIRST.

I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU. WHY'D YOU BECOME A SNIPER?

BECAUSE I'M A CRACK SHOT AND I LIKE THE SOLITUDE, I GUESS.

I MEAN, THAT'S NOT SOMETHING JUST ANYONE DOES.

IT'S HARD TO FARM IN THE MOUNTAINS, SO EVERYBODY HUNTS. WE'VE BEEN HUNTERS FOR GENERATIONS. I LEARNED AT AN EARLY AGE.

I WAS AN ONLY CHILD. I GREW UP WITH MY PARENTS IN THE MOUNTAINS.

WHAT TO HUNT AND WHAT NOT, HOW TO SHOOT AND WHEN, BUT MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL HOW TO WAIT. I GOT TO WHERE I COULD WAIT FOR DAYS ON END. HE WAS SO PROUD.

MY FATHER TAUGHT ME HOW TO HUNT. I OWE ALL THAT I AM TO HIM.

LIKE I SAID, IT'S ALL GOING TO BOIL DOWN TO WHO MAKES THE FIRST MISTAKE.

HE PROBABLY WENT THROUGH A CHILDHOOD LIKE MY OWN, AND THAT'S WHY HE'S SO GOOD.

I'LL BET THAT GUY OUT THERE IS THE SAME.

BEFORE THE WAR I WORKED AT A COFFEE SHOP WITH MY BEST FRIEND. WE WERE ALWAYS FIGHTING ABOUT SOMETHING. I'M JUST NOT SNIPER MATERIAL.

I COULDN'T DO THAT. ME? I GREW UP ON A FARM WITH A BUNCH OF NOISY BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

A GOOD SNIPER THINKS ABOUT NOTHING SAVE HIM AND HIS PREY. YOU'RE THE ONLY TWO IN THE WORLD.

THAT'S PART OF WHAT BEING A GOOD SNIPER IS ALL ABOUT: BEING WILLING TO BE ALONE FOR A LONG TIME, WITH NO ONE BUT YOUR PREY FOR COMPANY.

HUNTING IS A LONELY BUSINESS COMPARED TO FARMING, BUT WE BOTH LOVE OUR WORK.

IF I HADN'T STARTED YOUNG I'D PROBABLY HAVE HATED BEING ALONE. NOW I'M USED TO IT.

ME? I WAS ALWAYS ALONE. THE NEAREST NEIGHBORS WERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN AND THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY KIDS. ALL I HAD WAS THE HUNT.

I ENVY YOU. YOU HAD A FAMILY AND THAT FRIEND AT THE COFFEE SHOP.

NOT A BAD IDEA.

HEY, NEED A RELIEF? YOU CAN SLEEP, OR PEE OR WHATEVER.

DON'T WORRY. IT'LL RAIN EVENTUALLY.

HEY, THE CANTEEN'S EMPTY! WE GOT NO WATER!

SPRINGFIELD ... DIDN'T THEY MAKE A LOT OF WILD WEST GUNS?

I REMEMBER THE FIRST RIFLE I EVER SAW. IT WAS A OLD AND WORN OUT AMERICAN SPRINGFIELD RIFLE MY DAD HAD.

BE SURE TO GET ME AT ANY SIGN OF TROUBLE. THAT GUY OUT THERE IS FAR BETTER THAN YOU.

I REMEMBER THINKING AS I DID MY PULL-UPS, "GUNS ARE TO SHOOT, NOT DO PULL-UPS." I KNOW NOW THAT'S WHAT HE WANTED ME TO THINK ....

AND MORE. THIS ONE WASN'T ANY GOOD ANYMORE, SO MY DAD MADE A MAKESHIFT PULL-UP BAR WITH IT FOR ME TO USE.

HE'S GONE!

MMH?

"GONE TO GET WATER." OH YOU FOOL!!!

I AM NOT WAITING FOR RAIN COMING DAYS FROM NOW. I'M THIRSTY RIGHT NOW AND I WANT A DRINK.

STILL, I CAN'T RUSH THIS. IF HE SHOULD HEAR ...

LOOK TO THE LEFT, LOOK TO THE RIGHT, ALL SEEMS CLEAR ...

WE CAN'T TAKE THE CHANCE.
AAAAHHH ... A JAP WITH A TYPE 38 FITTED WITH A SNIPER SCOPE! CAN'T BE THE BLACK TRIGGER! HE'S WAY TOO CARELESS!
AAH!!!

GOTCHA!

THAT'S THE ADVANTAGE OF A SEMI-AUTOMATIC MIC GARAND SNIPER SPECIAL OVER A SINGLE SHOT, BOLT ACTION TYPE 38.

HRMPH! SO THIS BOW-LEGGED KID WAS THE BLACK--

HE'S TO THE RIGHT, OVER AT THAT CLUMP OF TREES, SIR!

EVERYONE GET DOWN! HE'S STILL OUT THERE!! WALKER!!! YOU HAVE ANYTHING?!!

HE'LL HAVE TO BREAK COVER TO DEAL WITH YOU AND THAT'S WHEN I'LL NAIL HIM!

SIR, AS SOON AS HE FIRES YOU GUYS NEED TO CHARGE! DRAW HIM OUT FOR ME, OKAY?

NOW EVERYONE LISTEN! JAP SNIPERS HAVE SINGLE SHOT BOLT ACTION RIFLES! WHEN HE SHOOTS WE'LL GET A FEW SECONDS BEFORE HE RELOADS!

YOU HEARD HIM! FIRE!!!

YEOOOO

THAT'S HIS ONE SHOT! NOW DRAW HIM OUT FOR ME!!!

SURPRISE, SURPRISE, AND NOW I'VE GOT MY SIGHTS SET, FRIEND.

OH NO! HE'S GOT A SEMI-AUTOMATIC SNIPER RIFLE TOO!!

BUT WHICH IS THE HUNTER, AND WHICH IS THE PREY?

SO NOW IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US, HUNTER AND PREY.

YOU SIT AND WAIT, AND HE SITS AND WAITS, WAITING FOR THAT ONE MISTAKE ....

THIS REMINDS ME OF THAT PUMA I HUNTED WHEN I WAS A LOT YOUNGER, BACK STATESIDE IN THE HILLS OF KENTUCKY ....

... AND THEN IT SAUNTERED STRAIGHT INTO MY SIGHTS LIKE I WASN'T EVEN THERE. SUCH A MAGNIFICENT BEAST ....

I SHIVERED IN THE COLD FOR TEN DAYS, WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT ....

I'VE HAD TO WAIT FOR THE RIGHT CHANCE, THE RIGHT MOMENT TO KILL SOME FORM OF PREY FOR MOST OF MY LIFE ....

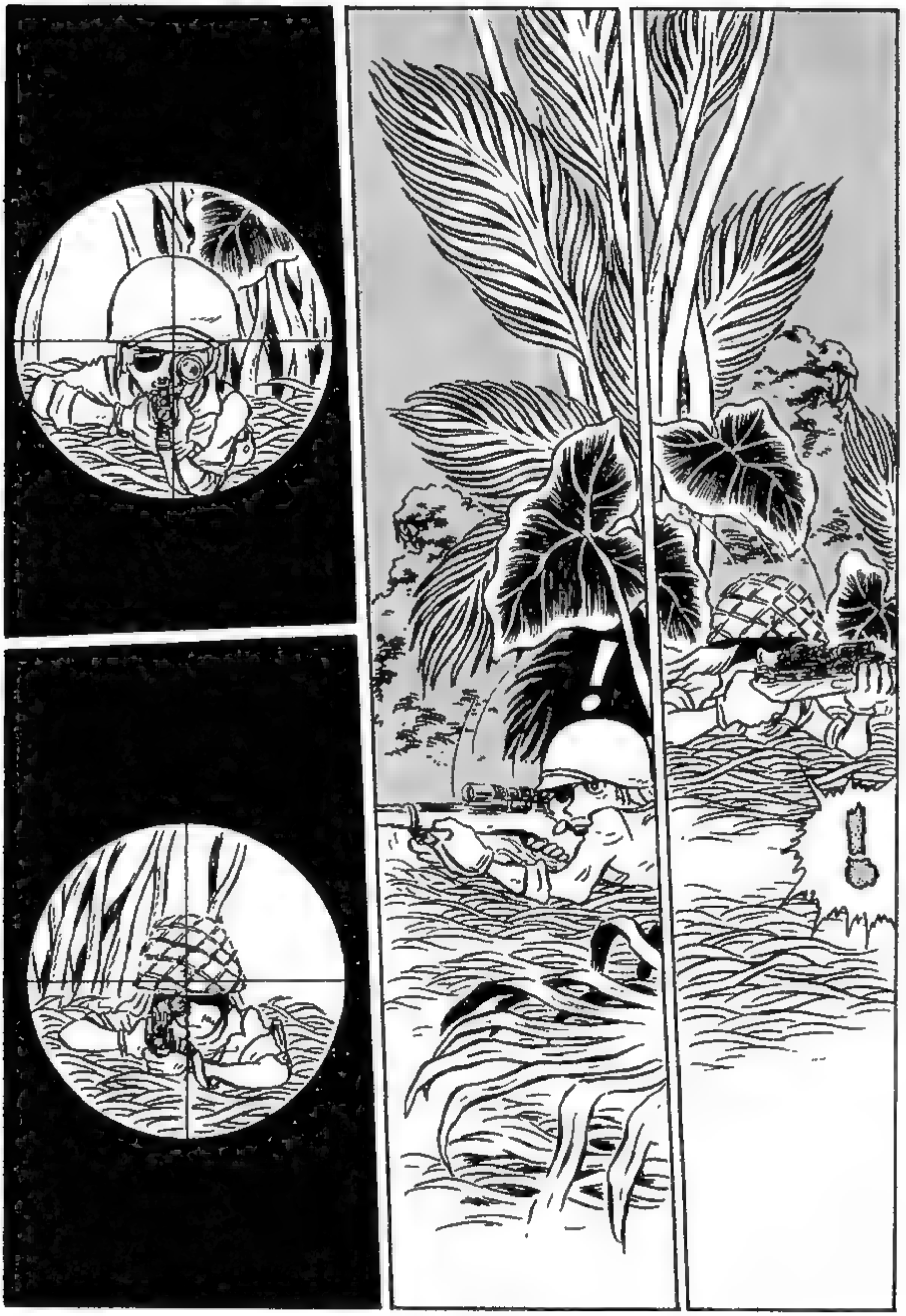
YES, THE WAITING GAME. ONE OF THE MOST ESSENTIAL PARTS OF A SNIPER'S JOB ....

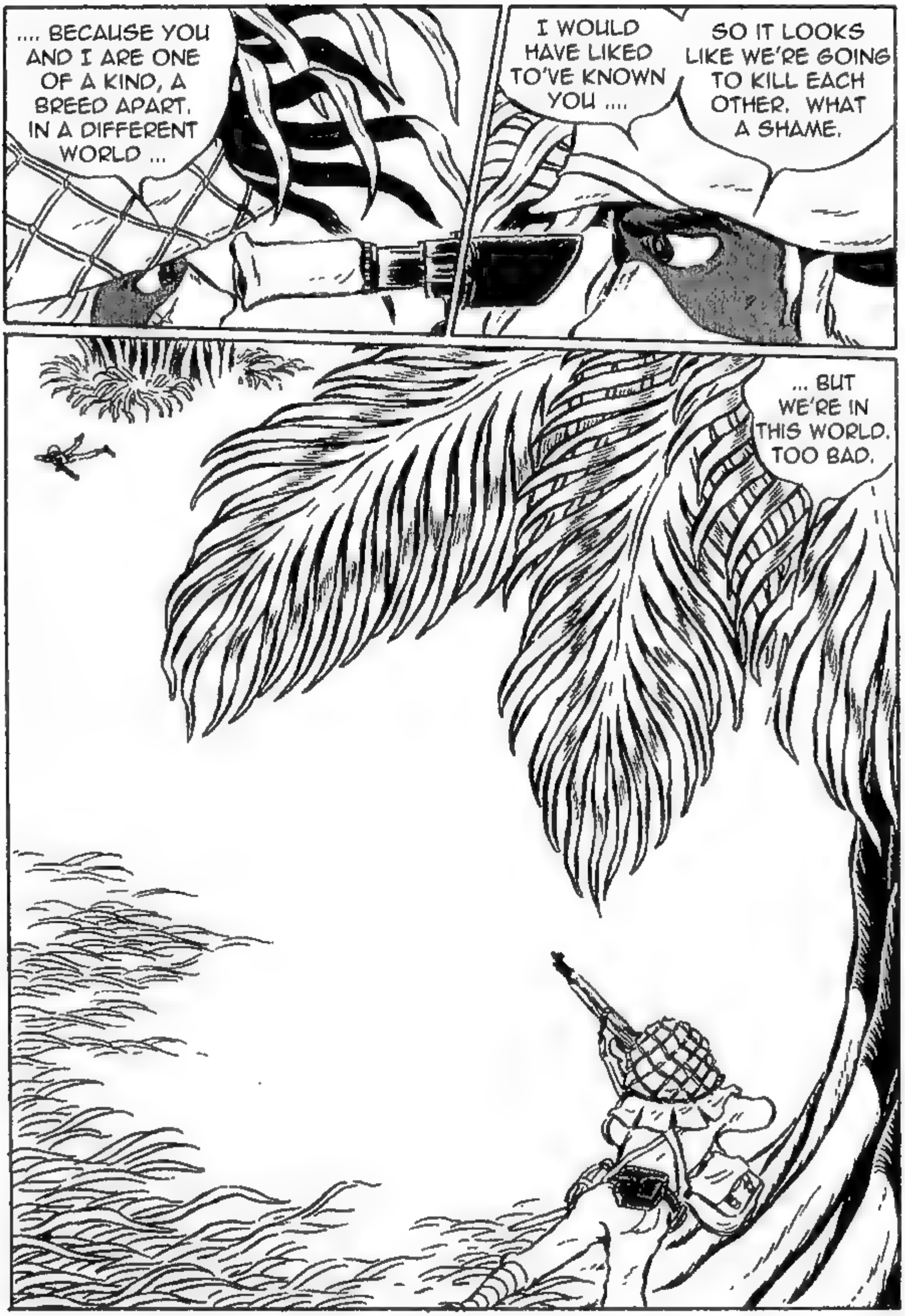
I REMEMBER THINKING HOW LONELY I WAS GOING TO BE, NOW THAT THE PUMA WAS DEAD ....

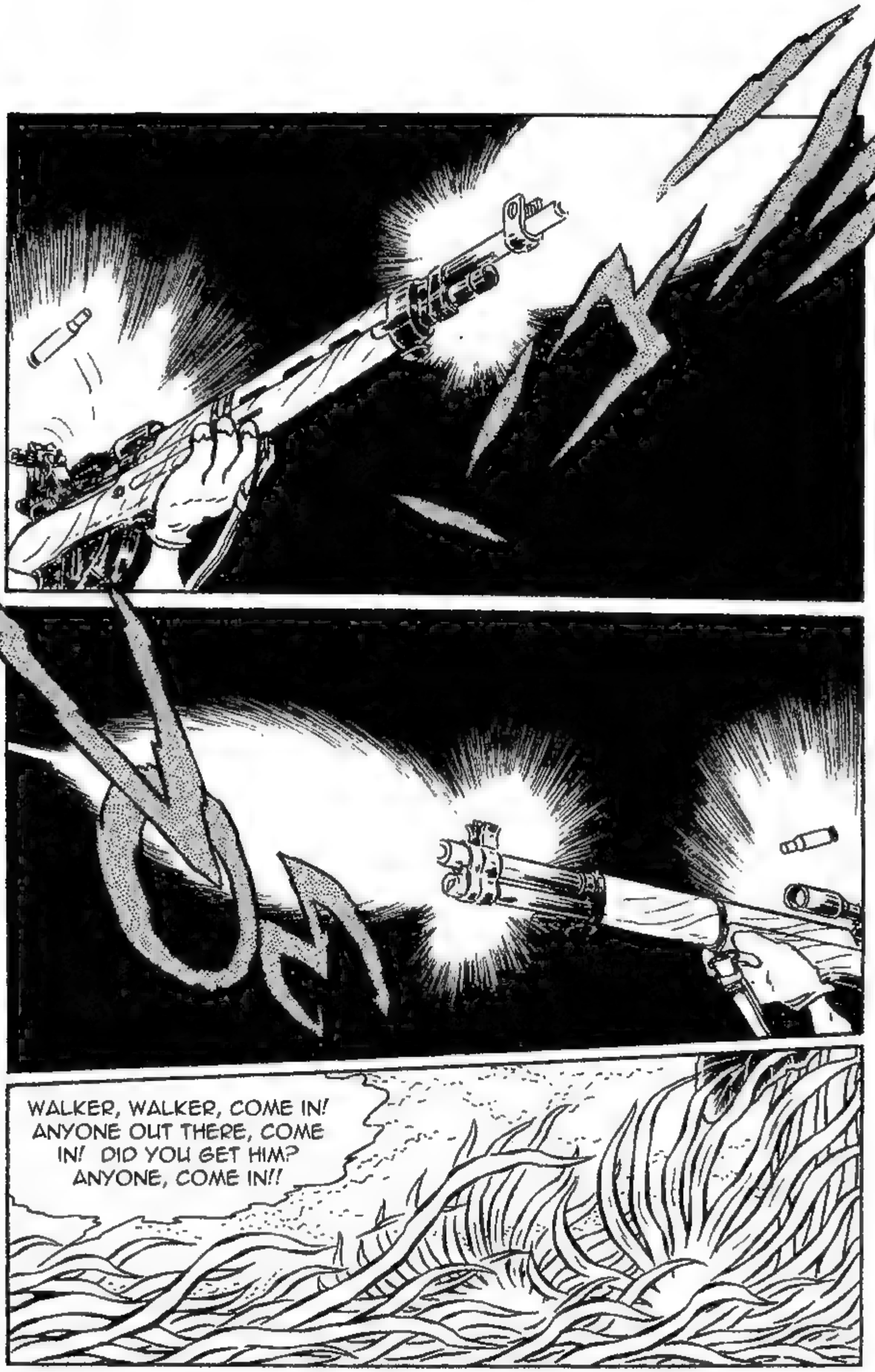
MY PREY WAS MY ONLY COMPANION ... MY ONLY FRIEND ....

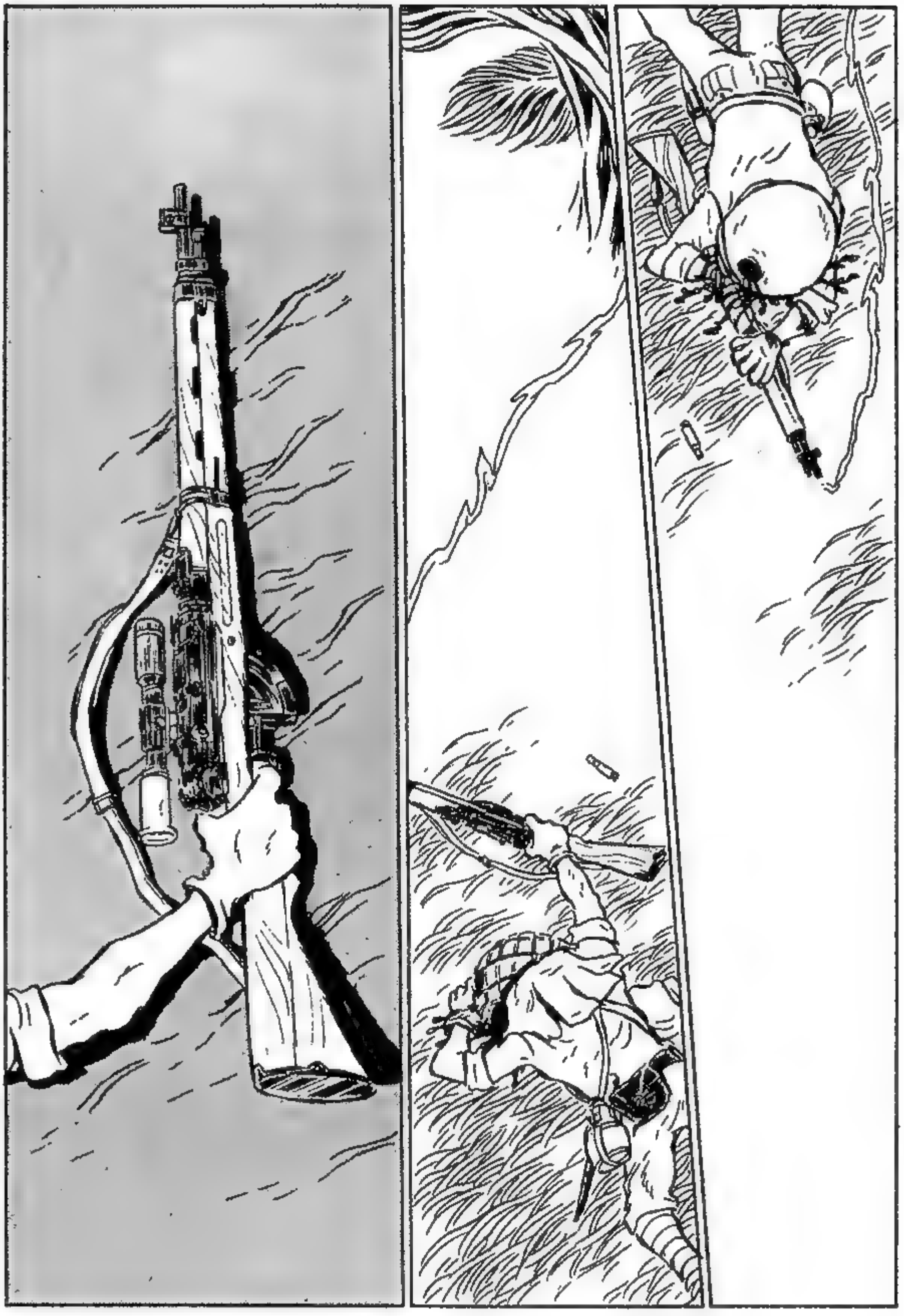
YES, FRIEND. IT'S JUST YOU AND ME ... AS YOU KNEW IT WOULD BE.

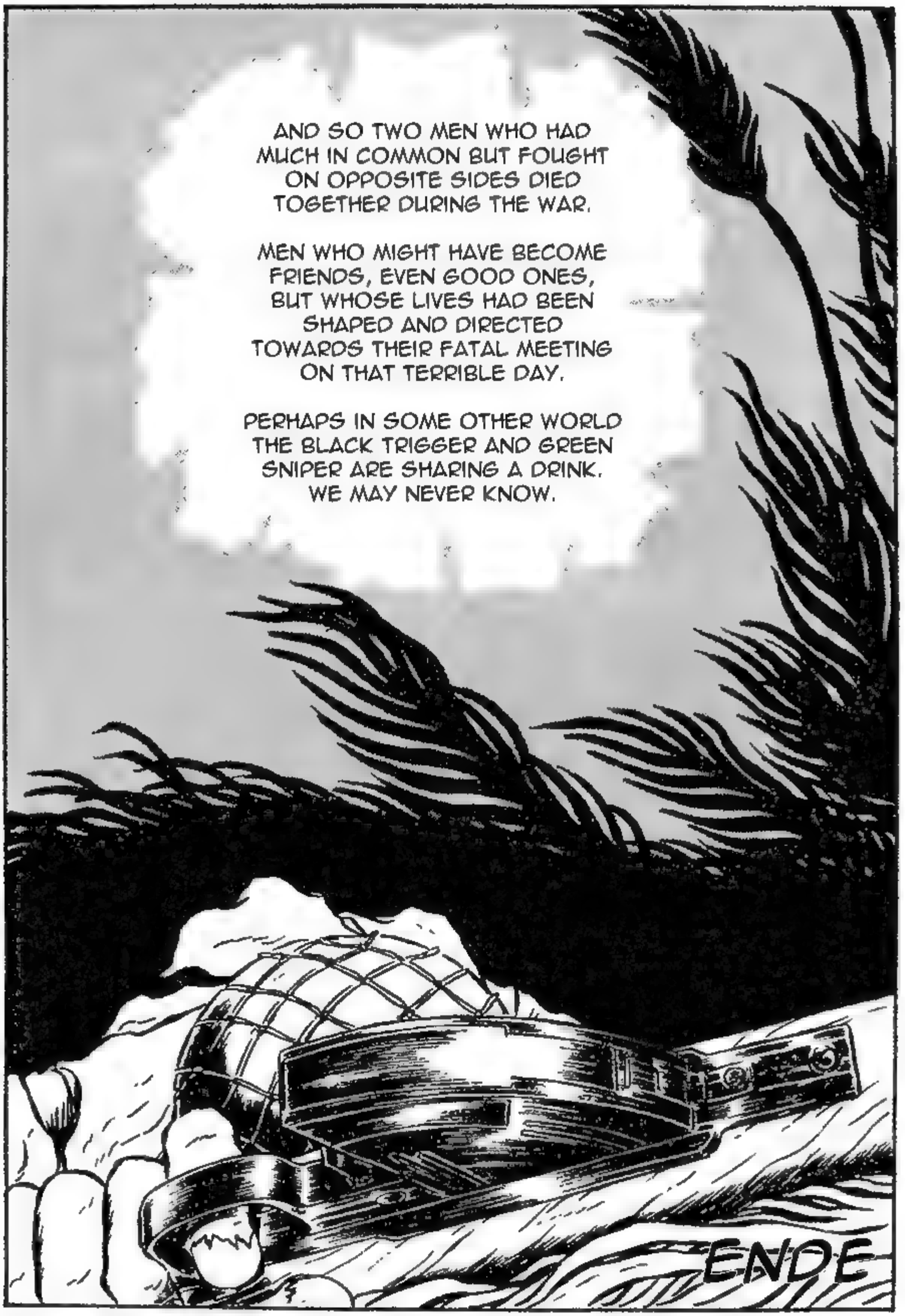
WELL, MY FRIEND OUT THERE, IT'S JUST YOU AND ME.




.... BECAUSE YOU AND I ARE ONE OF A KIND, A BREED APART. IN A DIFFERENT WORLD ...
I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO'VE KNOWN YOU ....
SO IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO KILL EACH OTHER. WHAT A SHAME.
... BUT WE'RE IN THIS WORLD. TOO BAD.


WALKER, WALKER, COME IN! ANYONE OUT THERE, COME IN! DID YOU GET HIM? ANYONE, COME IN!!




AND SO TWO MEN WHO HAD MUCH IN COMMON BUT FOUGHT ON OPPOSITE SIDES DIED TOGETHER DURING THE WAR.
MEN WHO MIGHT HAVE BECOME FRIENDS, EVEN GOOD ONES, BUT WHOSE LIVES HAD BEEN SHAPED AND DIRECTED TOWARDS THEIR FATAL MEETING ON THAT TERRIBLE DAY.
PERHAPS IN SOME OTHER WORLD THE BLACK TRIGGER AND GREEN SNIPER ARE SHARING A DRINK. WE MAY NEVER KNOW.
ENDE

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 41, 1973>

NO ONE HAS CROSSED THIS PLAIN IN CELEBANKA IN YEARS SAVE FOR ME AND THE WINDS THAT STILL SWEEP ACROSS IT. THE DAYTIME SKY IS AS BLUE AS I REMEMBER IT ....

THAT RUSTING MOTORCYCLE WITH THE SIDECAR AND MACHINE GUN OVER THERE, ONE THAT MIGHT EASILY BE MISTAKEN FOR AN AMERICAN HARLEY-DAVIDSON ....

SOMETIMES I STILL HEAR THE SOUND OF ITS ENGINE, AND THE VOICES OF THE TWO MEN WHO RODE IT ....

I WAS A SOLDIER IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY DURING WORLD WAR II. LATE IN THE WAR I WAS PART OF THE FORCES THAT WERE SENT ...

... EAST TO THE PHILIPPINES, AFTER MACARTHUR HAD RETAKEN IT AS HE HAD PROMISED.

I WAS A SCOUT RIDER. MODERN DAY CAVALRY, YOU MIGHT SAY. I RODE A MOTORCYCLE AND CARRIED A MACHINE GUN, AND I WAS VERY GOOD WITH BOTH. AHH, SO LONG AGO ....

STEEL DRAGOON

I REST MY HAND ON THAT RUSTED MOTORCYCLE. IT'S BEEN THIRTY YEARS SINCE I LAST SAW IT, AS IT RACED ACROSS THAT PLAIN DURING THE WAR ....

IT SLUMBERS NOW IN ETERNAL SLEEP, YET IT WAS ONCE ALIVE, AND VERY MUCH SO, AS IT LIVES NOW IN MY MEMORY.

SO LONG AGO ....

TARGET, FRONT AND LEFT! RANGE, 15,000 METERS TO THE ENEMY POSITIONS!

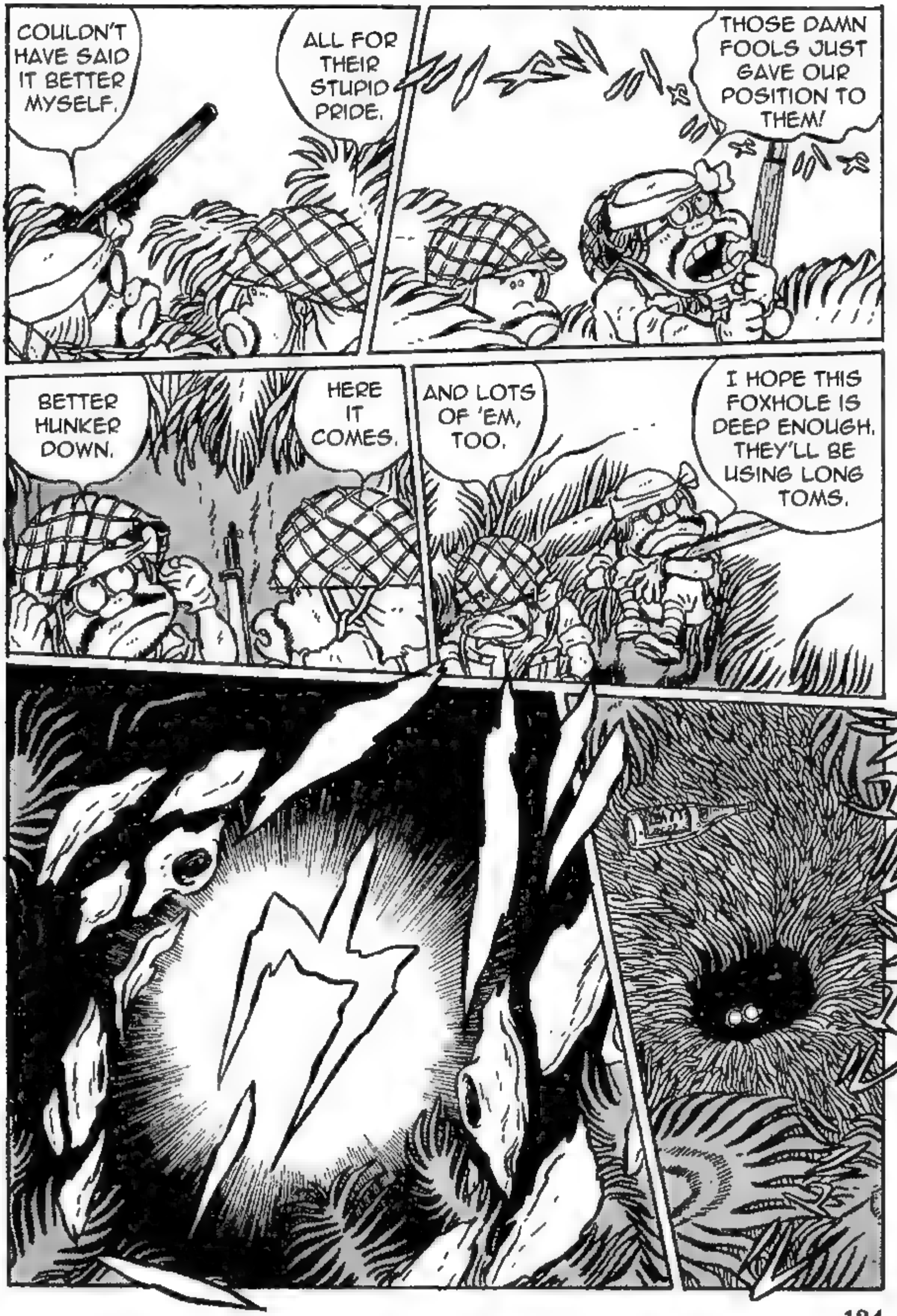
IT WAS IN THE FALL OF 1944, DURING THE ORMOC VALLEY CAMPAIGN, AS WE MOPPED UP THE LAST OF THE JAPANESE IN THE PHILIPPINES ....

WELL, THEY DRAGGED THOSE DAMN GUNS ALL THE WAY HERE FROM JAPAN, AND THEY'LL BE DAMMNED IF THEY DON'T USE THEM AT LEAST ONCE!

THEY'RE NOT GOING TO SHOOT THAT THING, ARE THEY? THEY'RE CRAZY! THIS ISN'T GOOD!!

OH SHIT! WE'D BETTER FIND SOME COVER!

FIRE!


COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER MYSELF.
ALL FOR THEIR STUPID PRIDE.
THOSE DAMN FOOLS JUST GAVE OUR POSITION TO THEM!
BETTER HUNKER DOWN.
HERE IT COMES.
AND LOTS OF 'EM, TOO.
I HOPE THIS FOXHOLE IS DEEP ENOUGH. THEY'LL BE USING LONG TOMS.

WHAT A MESS.

I THINK IT'S OVER. I'LL TAKE A LOOK.

I COULD JUST KILL THOSE ... NO, WAIT. I'LL BET THEY'RE DEAD NOW.

DAMN! THIS IS NOT GOOD!

DO I LOOK ALL RIGHT?! SOMEBODY JUST RAN OVER ME!!

KODAI, YOU ALL RIGHT?

?!

OWW!!

IT'S A DISPATCH RIDER!

HE'S LUCKY TO BE ALIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, I DON'T THINK THAT BIKE'LL EVER RUN AGAIN.

ALL RIGHT, FELLA! OFF YOU COME FOR SOME AID!

POOR FELLA ... NO, WAIT! I THINK HE'S STILL BREATHING! YEAH! HE'S ALIVE!

HE MUST HAVE BEEN COMING HERE WHEN THE AMERICANS OPENED UP WITH THEIR LONG TOMS.

... I ... I'M ... MOTHER ...

WHY ... HE'S JUST A KID! CAN'T BE ANY OLDER THAN 16 TOPS!

OOH, A TANKER PISTOL!

HA-HA-HAH! GO GET THE BOY SOME MILK -- I MEAN SAKE!

MOTHER?

STOP CALLING ME SIR, AND AS FOR ...

PVT. UTSONOMYA REPORTING, SIR! I'M HERE TO GET THE AIRFIELD SOME REINFORCEMENTS, SIR!

THAT'S MINE, SIR!

TOO BAD HE'S STILL ALIVE, 'CUZ IF HE WEREN'T THEN THESE'D BE MINE.

AND A TYPE 100 SMG! THIS KID IS SET UP!

THE AMERICANS JUST GOT THROUGH WIPING OUT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING HERE. SORRY, KID.

REIN-FORCE-MENTS, WELL ...

THE AIRFELD'S IN AMERICAN HANDS NOW! AREN'T YOU LISTENING, KID?!

WHEN I LEFT THE AIRFIELD GARRISON WAS STILL HOLDING OUT. THAT'S WHY I WAS SENT HERE, SO WE COULD GET REINFORCEMENTS FOR A PROPER RETREAT.

SOUTH?! KID, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN ON THE ROAD! SOUTH MEANS AMERICANS!

IN THAT CASE I'VE GOT TO GO BACK SOUTH TO THE AIRFIELD WITH THE BAD NEWS!

SIR, DOES A MAN BREAK HIS WORD? I'VE GOT TO GO BACK. I MADE A PROMISE.

THE AMERICANS ARE ONLY 15,000 METERS THAT WAY AND THAT'S THE WAY YOU JUST CAME FROM YOUR TIRE TRACKS. UNDERSTAND?!

KID, JUST LISTEN, OKAY?

I'VE GOT TO GO BACK. I'M SORRY. I MADE A PROMISE AND I'VE GOT TO GO BACK TO KEEP IT.

AND HOW, PRAY TELL, ARE YOU GOING TO GET BACK? THIS BIKE IS TRASHED!

OUR ORDERS WERE TO HOLD FAST AND STAND OUR GROUND. I HAVE TO TELL THEM THEY'RE ON THEIR OWN.

I DON'T CARE HOW MANY AMERICANS I HAVE TO GO THROUGH, I'M GOING BACK.

HE'S NOT HEARING ME. OH, BOY ....

YOU GOT NO GAS OR OIL, YOU GOT HOLES IN YOUR CRANKCASE AND GAS TANK -- NEED I GO ON?

HAVEN'T YOU BEEN LISTENING?! IF YOU GO BACK SOUTH YOU'RE DEAD!

THEN I'LL FIX THIS BIKE, OR WALK IF I HAVE TO!

THE OTHERS TOOK ALL THE GOOD ONES WHEN THEY LEFT!

THEN I'LL GET ANOTHER VEHICLE.

NO, THAT'S NOT IT. WHAT'S THE ONE FOR WHEN YOU GET OFF YOUR MOUNT TO FIGHT LIKE A GRUNT?

HIM AND THAT BIKE. MAKES ME THINK OF THE OLD MOUNTED CAVALRY -- THE, AHH, UHH, THE RYUKISHI*, YOU KNOW?

WHAD'DY'A KNOW? HE PASSED OUT. POOR KID.

BUT I'VE GOT ... TO GO ... BACK ...

THE COSSACKS, THE FRENCH DRAGOONS, THE AMERICAN SEVENTH CAVALRY, EVEN THE BRITISH ON OCCASION.

NOT TO MENTION SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS ARMY UNITS BEING CAVALRY.

AS I WAS SAYING, CAVALRY'S KEPT UP WITH THE TIMES EVEN IF THEIR MOUNTS ARE NOW IRON AND STEEL.

RYUKIHEI.+ I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE POINTS FOR BEING CLOSE.

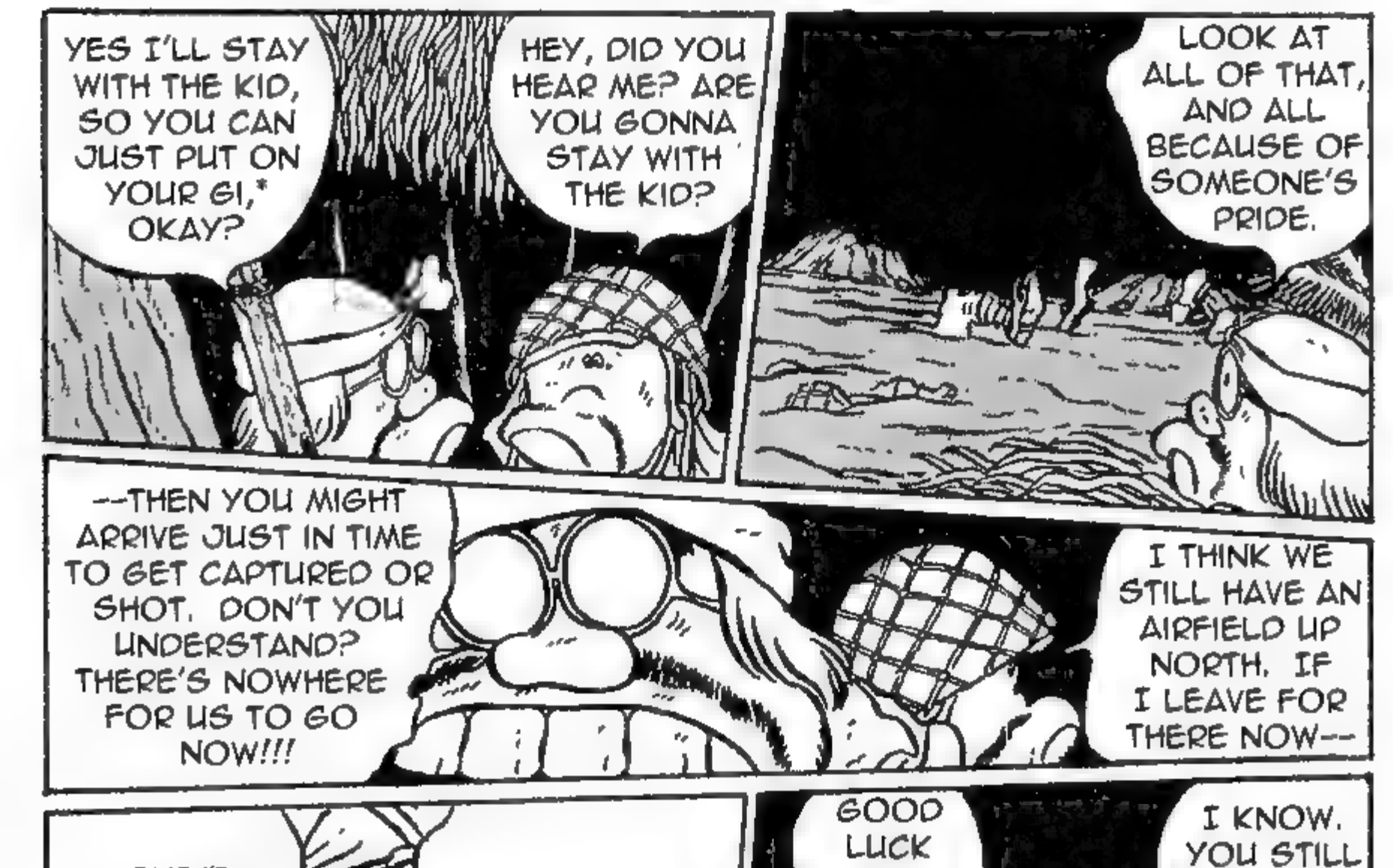
BUT THAT MEANS THAT SOMEBODY'S GONNA HAVE TO STAY HERE AND KEEP AN EYE ON HIM.

I SAY WE LET THE KID SLEEP. HE'S EXHAUSTED AND HE NEEDS ALL THE SLEEP HE CAN GET.

YEAH. TOO BAD THAT BIKE IS TOAST. IT WAS A NICE BIKE.

RYUKISHI - LIT. "DRAGON KNIGHT," ONE WHO FIGHTS "FROM THE SADDLE."
RYUKIHEI - LIT. "DRAGON SOLDIER," ONE WHO DISMOUNTS TO FIGHT.

(*) LIT. "YOU CAN UNSTICK YOUR SHORTS" OR "DON'T GET YOUR PANTIES IN A WAD." XD


YES I'LL STAY WITH THE KID, SO YOU CAN JUST PUT ON YOUR GI,* OKAY?
HEY, DID YOU HEAR ME? ARE YOU GONNA STAY WITH THE KID?
LOOK AT ALL OF THAT, AND ALL BECAUSE OF SOMEONE'S PRIDE.
--THEN YOU MIGHT ARRIVE JUST IN TIME TO GET CAPTURED OR SHOT. DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? THERE'S NOWHERE FOR US TO GO NOW!!!
I THINK WE STILL HAVE AN AIRFIELD UP NORTH. IF I LEAVE FOR THERE NOW--
... I WON'T ABANDON YOU ... I'M COMING BACK ....
... I'M COMING BACK. YOU'LL SEE ... I WILL! I AM COMING BACK! ...
GOOD LUCK WITH THE KID.
I KNOW. YOU STILL GOTTA TRY.

IT-IT'S ALMOST MORNING! WHY DIDN'T YOU WAKE ME?! I'VE GOT TO GO!!

HOWDY. SLEEP WELL?

WE GOT MORE?! *NOM-NOM-NOM!!* I'M SO HUNGRY! *NOM-NOM-NOM!!* I'VE HAVEN'T HAD A GOOD MEAL IN-- *NOM-NOM!!*

EAT ALL OF IT! WE GOT MORE!

EAT FIRST! GET YOUR STRENGTH! HAVE SOME RICE!!

WE'RE ALONE? *URP!*

FIGURES. ANYWAY, THOSE ARTILLERY BOYS LEFT IT BEHIND WHEN THEIR SURVIVORS TOOK OFF WITH ALL OF THE SURVIVING VEHICLES.

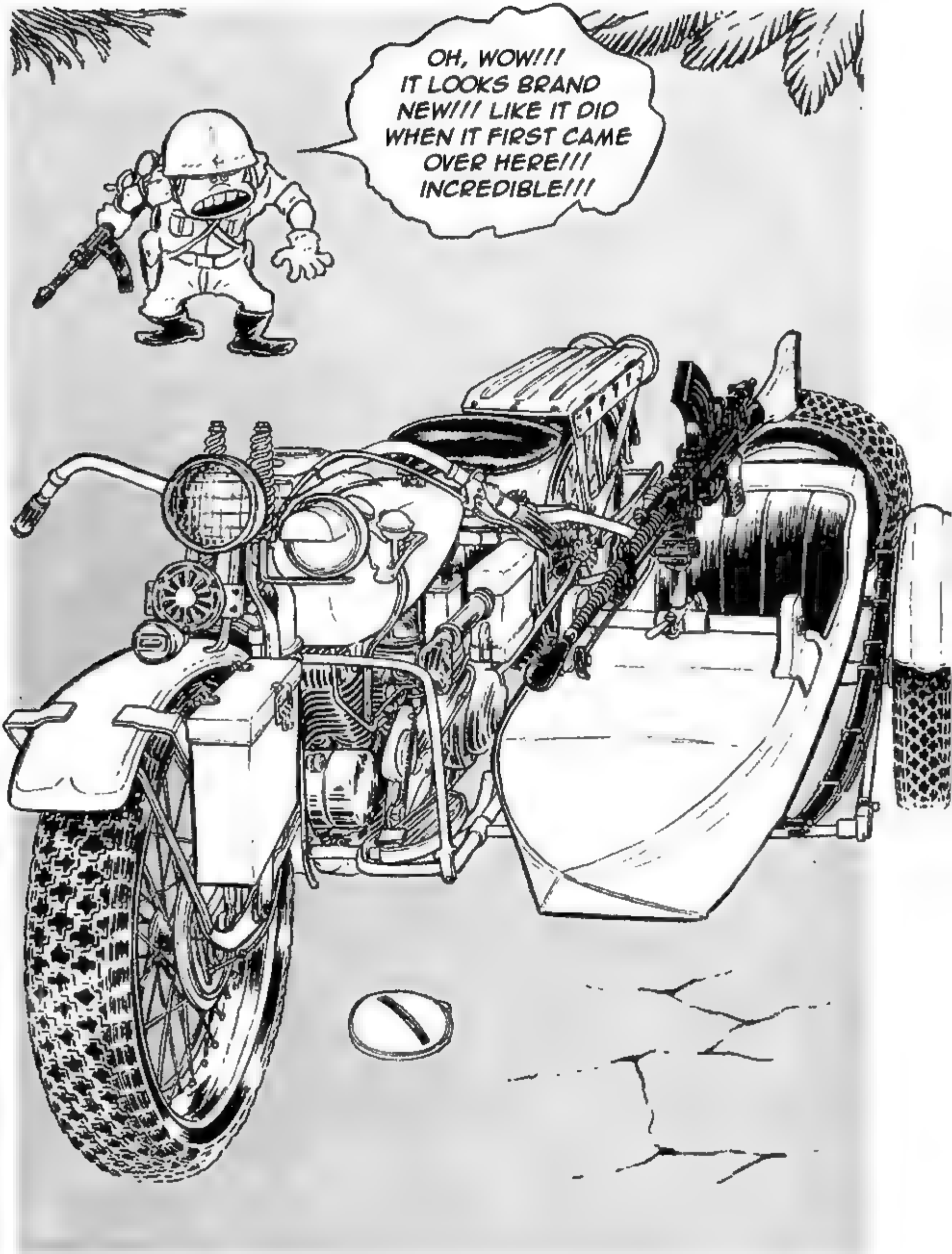
OH THANK YOU! BUT WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE?

HERE! EAT! FILL UP! IT'S JUST GOING TO GO TO WASTE ANYWAY.

MY BIKE? YOU MEAN THEY'VE FIXED MY BIKE?! IT'LL RUN AGAIN?! BUT IT WAS IN SUCH BAD SHAPE!! IT ...

SOMEONE HAD TO COOK THE RICE, AS WELL AS GETTING YOUR BIKE ALL FIXED BACK UP.

HUH?


OH, WOW!!!
IT LOOKS BRAND NEW!!! LIKE IT DID WHEN IT FIRST CAME OVER HERE!!!
INCREDIBLE!!!

YEAH, THAT TOO! I'M GLAD THEY GAVE YOU A RIKUO. THOSE ARE COPIES OF THE AMERICAN HARLEY DAVIDSON, WHO MAKE SOME OF THE BEST BIKES EVER MADE.

A NEW BATTERY!

WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE MOTOR POOL STILL HAD MOST OF EVERYTHING AND THE REST IS SALVAGE. FOR EXAMPLE, YOUR NEW HEADLIGHT IS OFF OF A WRECKED KUROGANE.*

... AND WHEN YOU START HER, JUST ONE KICK. THAT'S ALL. JUST ONE.

YOU'VE EVEN GOT A FULL TANK OF GAS ...

... THAT WAS WRECKED AND DIDN'T NEED 'EM ANYMORE, BUT WE WILL.

GOT THE MACHINE GUN AND MOUNT FROM A TRUCK ...

WELL, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO ALL OF OUR RIDING AT NIGHT, AREN'T WE?

THE NEW HEADLIGHT EVEN HAS THE COVER!

DOES IT MATTER, KID?

THIS IS AMAZING! WHO DID ALL OF THIS?

I CAN EVEN SING!

YOU CAN'T DRIVE AND MAN THE GUN TOO! BESIDES, I'M A COMBAT SPECIALIST! I'M GOOD WITH GUNS AND FIXING THINGS! I'M ALSO A DAMN GOOD COOK IF I SAY SO MYSELF

BUT SIR! YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME WITH ME! I MEAN--

YOU DRIVER, ME GUNNER.

KUROGANE - A TYPE OF JAPANESE ARMY LIGHT SCOUT VEHICLE IN USE DURING WORLD WAR II. IT'S JUST AS FAMOUS IN ITS OWN WAY AS THE WILLYS JEEP, THE GERMAN KUBELWAGEN, AND THE RUSSIAN GAZ-61

BOTTOMS UP!!!

THEN I'LL DRINK FOR BOTH OF US! LIKE ALL OF THAT LOVELY RICE, WE DON'T WANT THIS GOOD SAKE GOING TO WASTE!

YOU SHOULDN'T DRINK AND DRIVE, SIR. YOU KNOW THAT.

WANT ONE FOR THE ROAD?

THIS IS GREAT! IT RUNS SO SMOOTH!

ONE KICK IS RIGHT! AMAZING!

I HAD TO GET MINE FROM A PILOT WHO DIED. YOU'RE SO LUCKY.

YOU KNOW HOW STUFF PILES UP WHEN YOU'RE OLD.

WHERE'D YOU GET THE MUFFLER AND GOGGLES?

LET ME GET THESE THINGS SET.

THE WAY THIS BIKE IS RUNNING, SIR, I'LL BET WE CAN FLY!

THAT'S THE SPIRIT! NOW LET'S GET GOING, AND YOU CAN OPEN HER UP!

IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. I'VE GOT MINE AND YOU GOT YOURS AND THAT'S THAT!

THAT'S SAD. YOU THINK THEY'D HAVE ISSUED YOU SOME FROM THE START.

YOU DRIVE, I'LL DRINK!!

HERE WE GO!!

I WISH I HAD BEEN ABLE TO THANK THE MECHANIC!

THIS IS THE BEST THIS BIKE'S EVER RUN, AND I MEAN THAT, SIR!

THIS IS GREAT!

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I'M SURE HE APPRECIATES IT.

HE DID A FANTASTIC JOB FIXING THIS BIKE BACK UP!

YEEHAH!!

THIS BIKE IS LIKE GOOD SAKE! IT'S THE REAL THING!!

IT'S NOT JUST THE MOTOR! SHE HANDLES SMOOTH TOO!

THANK YOU, SIR!

YOU REMEMBERED THE HEADLIGHT COVER! GOOD!!

I WAS PLANNING TO ANYWAY, SIR. THERE WERE AMERICAN BIKE PATROLS THE LAST TIME I CAME THROUGH HERE.

OPEN 'ER UP! LET'S HAUL SOME ASS!!

SOUNDS LIKE A JAP BIKE.

WE'LL RIDE UNTIL SUNRISE AND THEN FIND A PLACE TO REST.

LET ME TRY FIRST!! AFTER THAT IT'S YOUR TURN!!!

SHIT!!

HEY! WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE!!

I THINK HE'S GONNA CRASH.

OF ALL THE .... HEY, LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN TROUBLE.

PROBABLY DIDN'T. WANNA BET HE'S AN AMERICAN? I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE.

THAT PILOT ACTED LIKE HE DIDN'T KNOW HIS OWN PLANE!

IT'S NOTHING. JUST A STOMACH ACHE.

THEY GET ONE OF OUR PLANES, LURE US OUT, AND-- HEY, ARE YOU OKAY?

AH! I WAS RIGHT!

FIGURES, GIVEN ALL THAT RICE YOU ATE.

A DIRTY TRICK BUT THAT'S WAR.

WAR IS NEVER FOUGHT FAIR, KID, NO MATTER WHAT THEY SAY. YOU USE EVERY TRICK TO WIN AND MORE.

WE'VE DONE THINGS TO THEM JUST AS BAD IF NOT WORSE, KID. IF I HAD THE TIME I'D TELL YOU SOME OF THEM.

THAT'S A DIRTY THING TO DO, TRICKING OUR SOLDIERS LIKE THAT AND THEN MOWING THEM DOWN! I SAY IT'S DISHONORABLE, SIR, ABSOLUTELY DISHONORABLE.

I'LL BE FINE, SIR. IT'S JUST THAT ... WELL ... THIS BIKE IS ME. WE BOTH CAME OVER TOGETHER FROM JAPAN. IT'S PART OF ME NOW IN A WAY I CAN'T DESCRIBE.

HEY KID, YOU LOOK TIRED. YOU WANT ME TO DRIVE?

WAR BRINGS OUT THE GOOD AND BAD IN US ALL.

THAT'S SAD, SIR, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT.

I DO.

I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN, SIR.

I GET THE FEELING THAT IF IT GOES, THEN I'LL GO. IF I GO, THEN IT'LL GO. IT'S MY HEART, MY SOUL, MY ...

IT WOULD BE COOL SAVE FOR THE FACT THAT IT MIGHT JUST GET US BOTH KILLED.

HERE WE ARE, YOU AND I, BOTH MODERN HORSE SOLDIERS RIDING INTO BATTLE ON OUR MODERN STEEL HORSE.

MOST OF THEM DIED WITH THEIR MOUNTS IN BATTLE, BOTH BEING TAKEN OUT AT THE SAME TIME.

MY FRIEND AND I WERE TALKING ABOUT CAVALRY.

I PREFER THIS IRON STEED, SIR. IT'S MORE PERSONAL.

OF COURSE NOW THE'VE GOT TANKS AND ARMORED CARS AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE THEY'LL COME UP WITH NEXT FOR MOUNTS.

WE'LL STILL MAKE IT.

I SEE.

ABOUT AN HOUR STRAIGHT RIDING, SIR, ASSUMING NO MORE TROUBLE WITH THE AMERICANS, BUT THE DAYLIGHT WILL CATCH US FIRST.

ABOUT HOW FAR ARE WE FROM THIS AIRFIELD OF YOURS?

WASTEFUL OR NOT, I MADE A PROMISE AND A PROMISE IS A PROMISE, SIR.

BUT WOULDN'T US BOTH DYING BE WASTEFUL?

I'M STILL GOING BACK, SIR. I MADE A PROMISE.

IT'S KIND OF POINTLESS, YOU KNOW, IF THE AMERICANS--

LET'S FIND SOME PLACE NICE WHERE WE BOTH CAN TAKE A NAP AND BE GOOD AND RESTED FOR TONIGHT.

WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME WE FIND A PLACE TO HOLE UP.

I'LL BE FINE, SIR.

YOU OKAY?

THEN SLEEP IN THE SIDECAR.

IF YOU'LL FORGIVE ME, I PREFER TO STAY WITH MY BIKE.

FROM HERE IT'S ONLY TWENTY MINUTES TO THE AIRFIELD, STRAIGHT SHOT. I GUESS THIS IS AS GOOD A PLACE AS ANY.

THANKS, SIR.

I'LL MAKE ME A NEST OVER HERE LIKE THE EAGLES DO.

WELL, WELL! AN AMERICAN BOMBER, LANDING AT YOUR AIRFIELD! IMAGINE THAT!

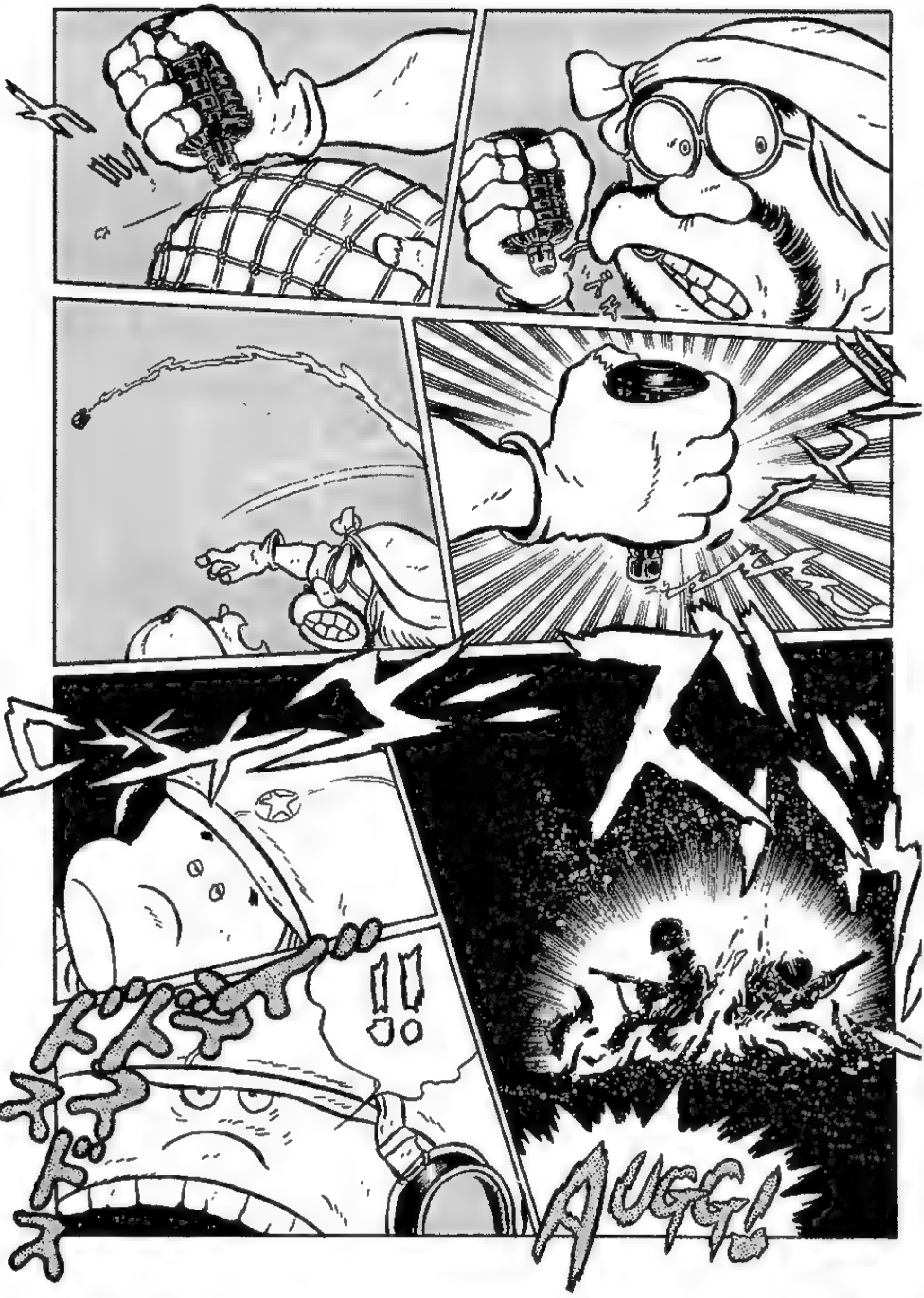
MAYBE ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS WHO USED TO BE AT THE AIRFIELD AND ALL OF MINE ARE SHINING DOWN ON US.

THAT'S ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGHTS IN THE WORLD.

SKNZX ...

YOU'RE A FOOL TO GO, AND I AM TO GO TOO.

WHAT TH--?! UH-OH.


!!
AUGH!

SHUT UP AND MAN THE GUN!! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING! THIS IS MY BIKE!! I SHOULD BE THE ONE DRIVING! STOP RIGHT NOW AND--

AAH!!

DAMN, BUT HE'S GOOD!

HOW CAN YOU TELL?

YOU SEE HOW HE SHOOTS WITH ONE HAND AND DRIVES WITH THE OTHER? THAT GUY'S A PRO!

YEAH! WHEN I WAS YOUNG AND FOOLISH LIKE YOU! KNOW WHAT? I LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT!

THEN IT WAS YOU!

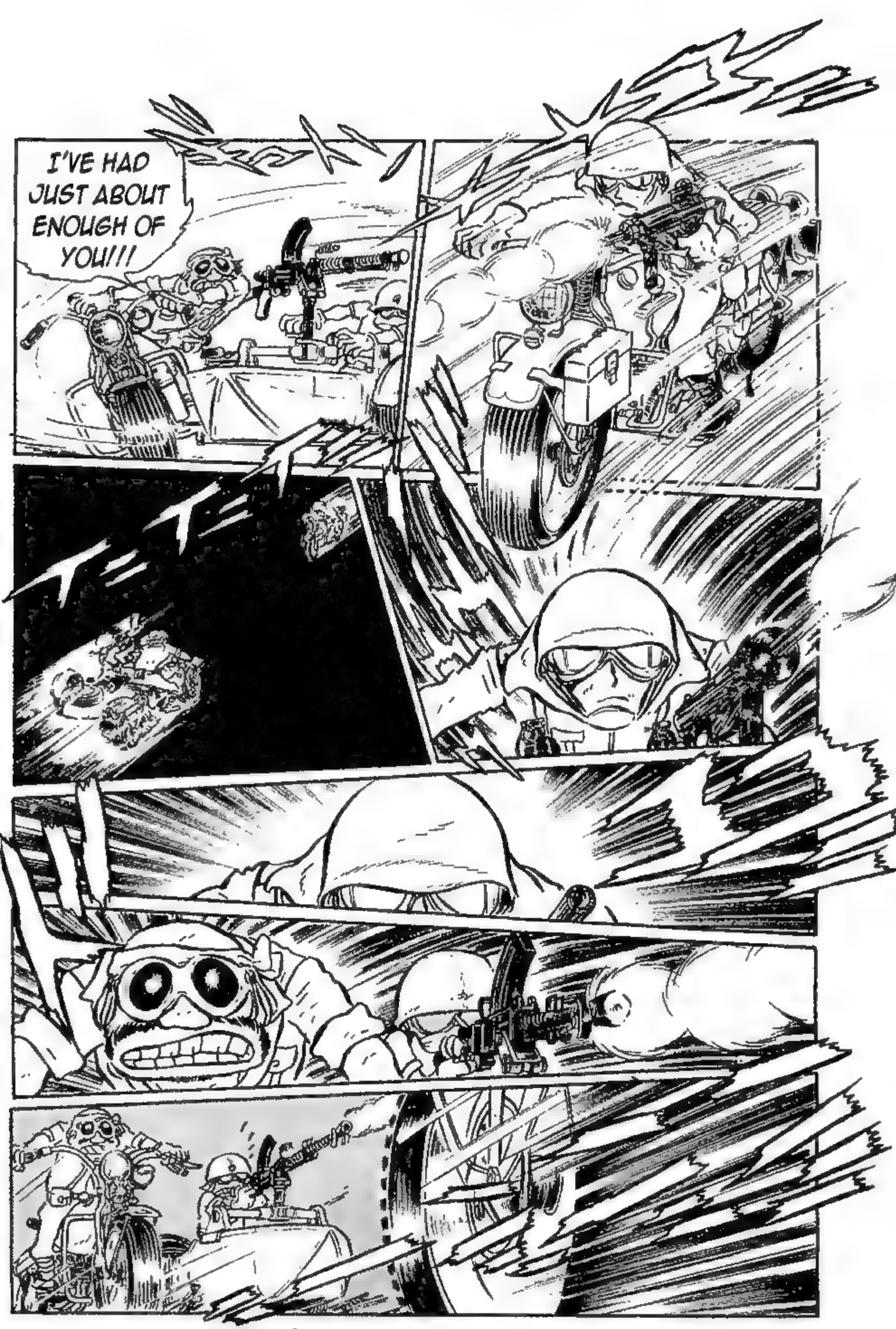
I USED TO RACE AND WORK ON BIKES BEFORE THE WAR.

NO TIME! MAN THE GUN!! HE'S COMING BACK!!!

WHY YOU--

SO I'M A LIAR TOO.

YOU LIED TO ME! YOU LED ME TO BELIEVE SOMEONE ELSE DID IT!


I'VE HAD JUST ABOUT ENOUGH OF YOU!!!

FWIP!!

GAH!!

HE'S TOO GOOD A DRIVER! HE DESERVES TO LIVE AND RACE ANOTHER DAY!!

WHY DIDN'T YOU FINISH HIM OFF, SIR?!?!

SIR! LET ME TAKE OVER!

YOU'RE YOUNG! GO HOME! HAVE A FAMILY! NAME YOUR ELDEST AFTER ME!

KODAI! DON'T LEAVE ME!!

KODAI!

AT LAST YOU SEE THE LIGHT ... BUT IT'S TOO LATE FOR ME. YOU SEE, THIS IS GOING TO BE MY LAST RACE. I NEVER FINISHED A RACE. I ALWAYS BROKE DOWN OR SOMETHING ELSE.

SIR! DON'T! THERE'S NO POINT NOW!!!

... MY LAST FINISH LINE. I'M SORRY, KID.

BUT THIS IS MY LAST RACE, AND THAT AIRFIELD ...

ALL I HAVE TO DO IS MAKE IT TO THE AIRFIELD. NOTHING ELSE MATTERS AFTER THAT.

I WAS A GOOD RACER, EVEN IF I NEVER WON A RACE, BUT I'M GONNA DO MY DAMNDEST TO WIN THIS ONE!

LIKE I TOLD YOU! LIVE! GO HOME! FIND A GIRL! HAVE KIDS!! AND REMEMBER ME!!!

SO I'M NOT BACKING OUT NOW FROM MY LAST RACE EVER. YOU HEAR ME, KID?!

IF I HAD KNOWN ... BUT I DIDN'T ... AND NOW ... AND NOW IT'S ... TOO ... LATE ....

BUT ... BUT KODAI ... I CAN'T! ... I WAS SHOT BY THAT PLANE! ... I ... I'M NOT GOING HOME. EVER ....

YOU SEE THOSE? FLARES. THEY KNOW I'M COMING. THEY'RE READY.

THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T COME WITH ME, KID. YOU'RE YOUNG, AND LIFE IS FOR THE YOUNG!

★426

LET HIM HAVE IT!!!!

... NO ... NO I'M NOT ... I DID ALL RIGHT ...

NO ... I COULDN'T DO IT ... THE ODDS ... THEY WERE JUST TOO GREAT ...

I'M STILL A FAILURE ....

... OOHHH ...

... KODAI ...

... IT ... IT WAS A ... GOOD ... LIFE ....

... I'M SATISIFIED ...

... I DID MY BEST ... THAT'S ALL ... THAT MATTERS.

KILL THAT CRAZY JAP!!!

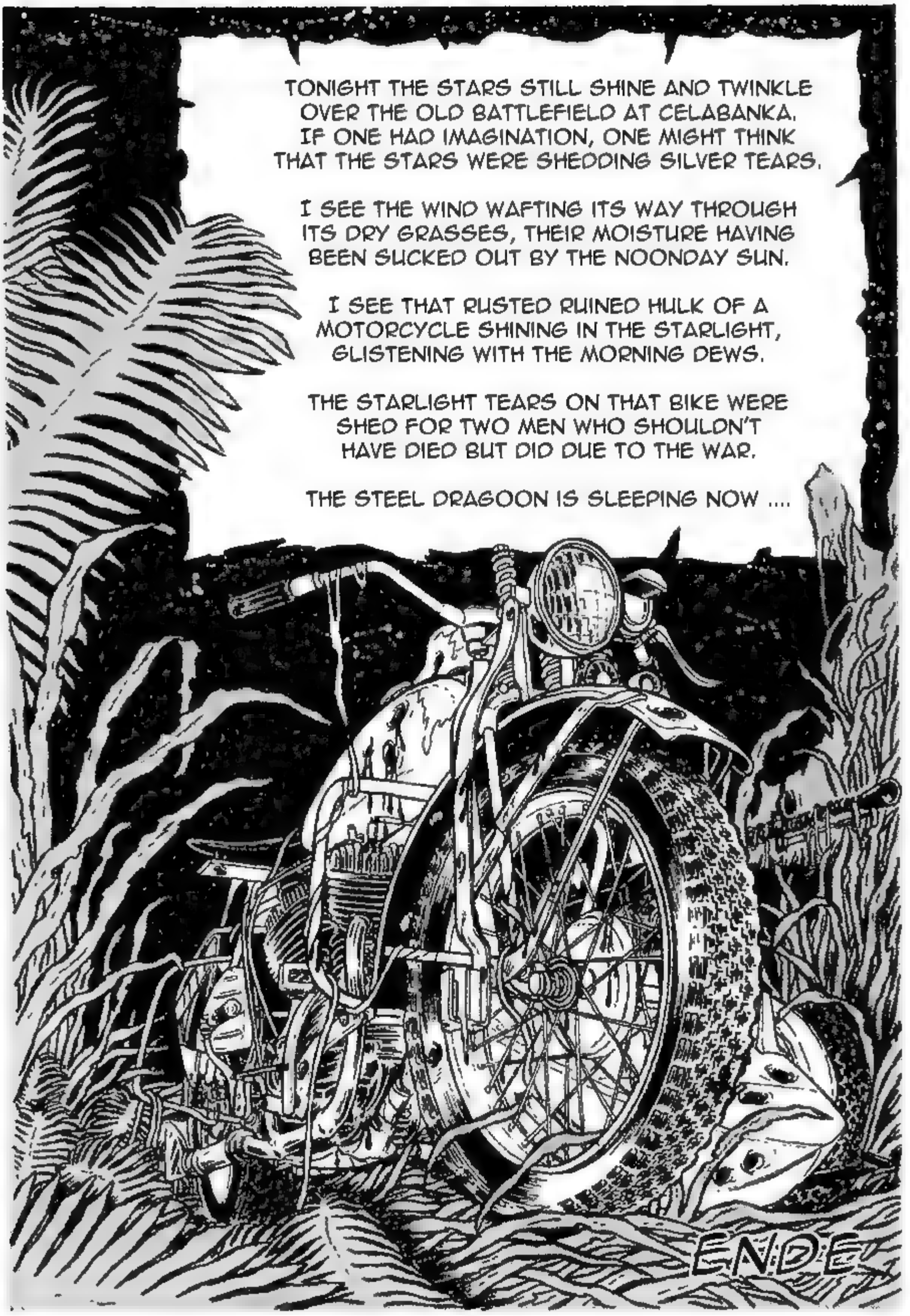
BOO!!!

YOU WANNA KILL US ALL?!

I SMELL GAS! STOP!!

THAT GUY ... HE WAS SOMETHING ELSE.

YOU COULD HAVE KILLED ME BUT YOU LET ME LIVE. I'M GRATEFUL.
WHAT A WASTE. I KNOW WE WERE ENEMIES, BUT STILL ... WHAT A WASTE.


TONIGHT THE STARS STILL SHINE AND TWINKLE
OVER THE OLD BATTLEFIELD AT CELABANKA.
IF ONE HAD IMAGINATION, ONE MIGHT THINK
THAT THE STARS WERE SHEDDING SILVER TEARS.
I SEE THE WIND WAFTING ITS WAY THROUGH
ITS DRY GRASSES, THEIR MOISTURE HAVING
BEEN SUCKED OUT BY THE NOONDAY SUN.
I SEE THAT RUSTED RUINED HULK OF A
MOTORCYCLE SHINING IN THE STARLIGHT,
GLISTENING WITH THE MORNING DEWS.
THE STARLIGHT TEARS ON THAT BIKE WERE
SHED FOR TWO MEN WHO SHOULDN'T
HAVE DIED BUT DID DUE TO THE WAR.
THE STEEL DRAGOON IS SLEEPING NOW ....
END

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 24, 1974>

MEKONG SUNSET

TODAY THE SURFACE OF THE MEKONG RIVER IS COVERED IN MAYFLIES. IT USUALLY IS DURING THE WARM MONTHS OF THE YEAR.

THEY REMIND ME OF ALL THOSE I KNEW DURING THE WAR WHO DIED BEFORE THEIR TIME ....

THEY SHOULD HAVE LIVED AND GROWN OLD AS DID I AND ALL OF THE OTHERS WHO WERE SPARED, BUT I GUESS THEIR TIME CAME SOONER THAN IT DID FOR THE REST OF US.

GRANDPA! ISN'T IT GORGEOUS? I CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF IT!

YES, YES ....

YES, YES ....

HEY, DID YOU HEAR THAT? SOUNDED LIKE A GUN!

YES ....

LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE GOOD FISHING TODAY.

NOW IT'S GONE. MORE LIKE AN ECHO THAN THE REAL THING.

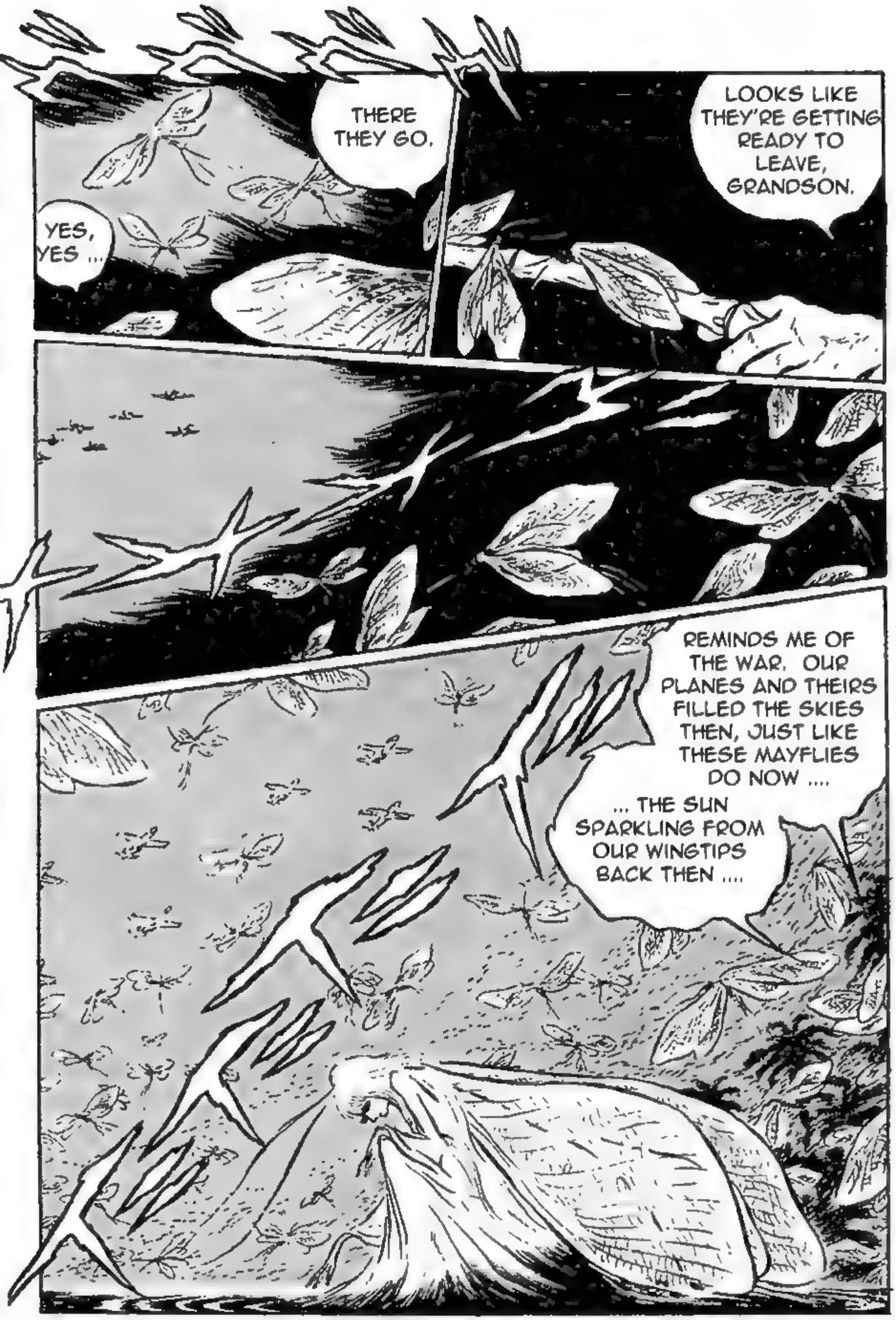
YES, YES ....

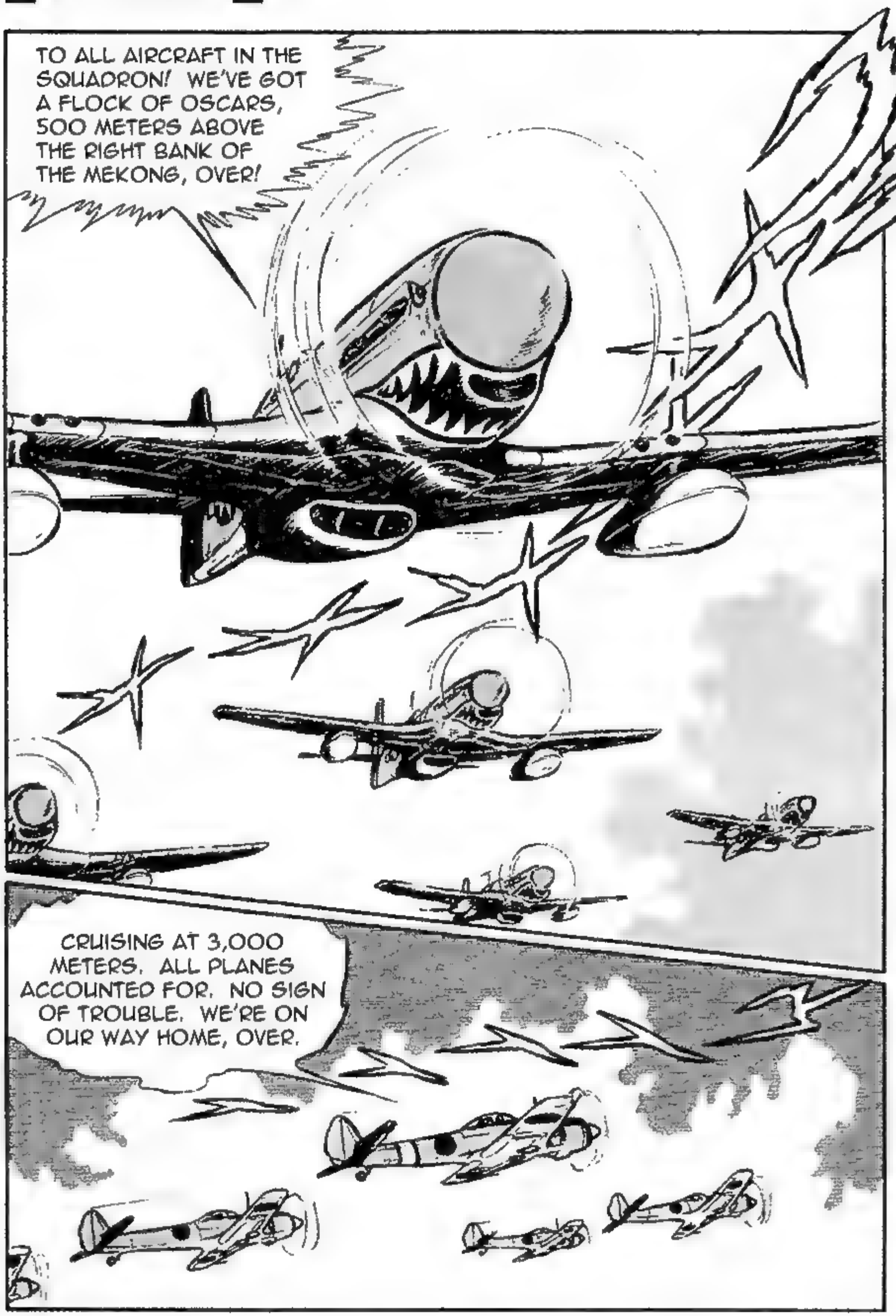
LIKE A PLANE READY TO TAKE OFF.

YES, YES ...

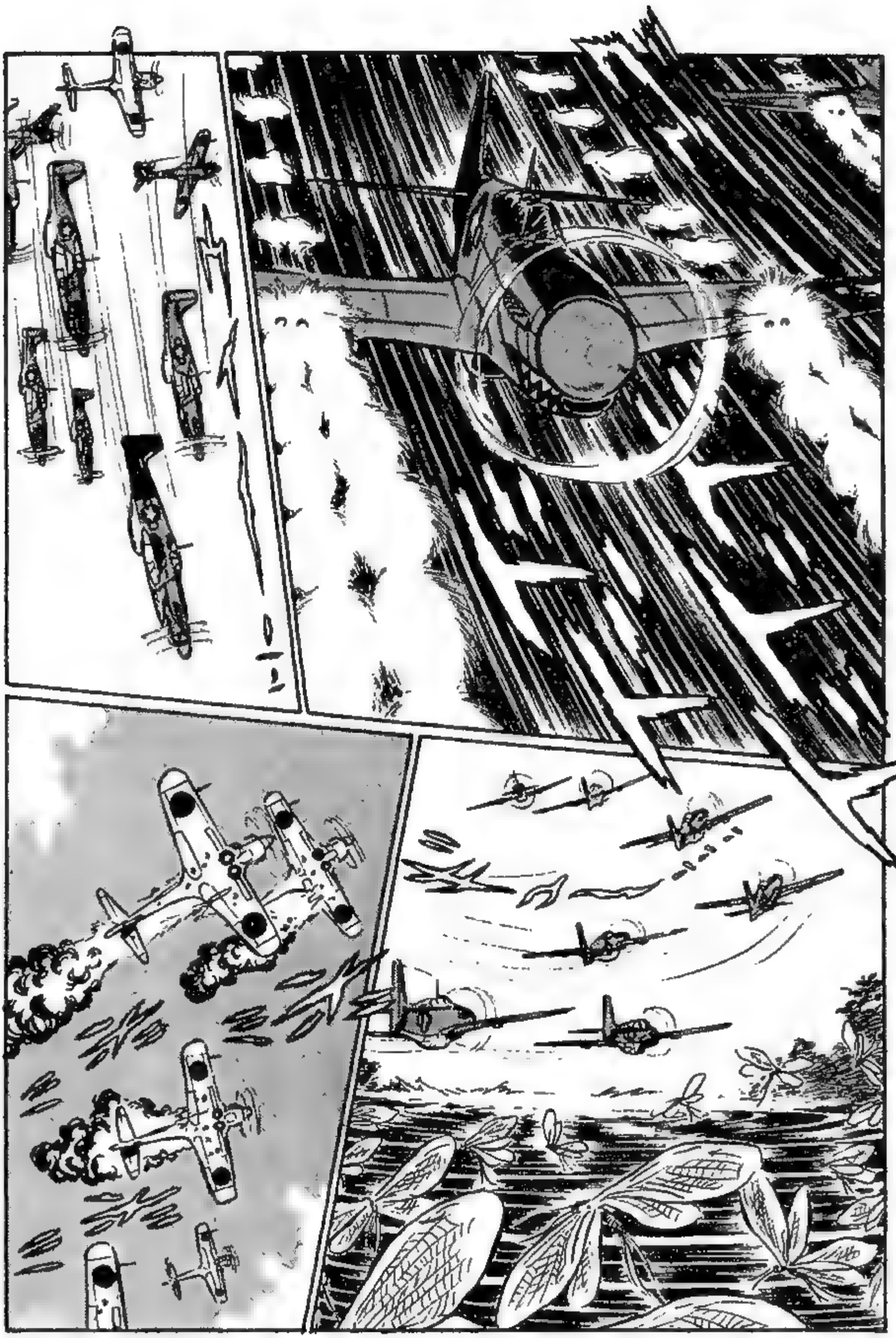
LOOK AT THAT MAYFLY ON YOUR CORK!

THE BOY DIDN'T KNOW HOW TRUE IT WAS, BUT I DID. I COULD REMEMBER SWARMS OF PLANES, LIKE THOSE MAYFLIES ....


THERE THEY GO.
LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GETTING READY TO LEAVE, GRANDSON.
YES, YES ...
REMINDS ME OF THE WAR. OUR PLANES AND THEIRS FILLED THE SKIES THEN, JUST LIKE THESE MAYFLIES DO NOW ....
... THE SUN SPARKLING FROM OUR WINGTIPS BACK THEN ....


TO ALL AIRCRAFT IN THE SQUADRON! WE'VE GOT A FLOCK OF OSCARS, 500 METERS ABOVE THE RIGHT BANK OF THE MEKONG, OVER!
CRUISING AT 3,000 METERS. ALL PLANES ACCOUNTED FOR. NO SIGN OF TROUBLE. WE'RE ON OUR WAY HOME, OVER.

ROOKIES, DON'T FORGET YOU'RE 100 MPH FASTER THAN THEM AND FAR MORE MANEUVERABLE! FLY RIGHT AND YOU WON'T GET SHOT DOWN!
THESE ARE PROBABLY THE ONES THAT HIT THAT BRITISH SUPPLY DEPOT EARLIER, SO THEY'LL BE LOW ON FUEL AND AMMO!
EVERYBODY! ONE PASS, GO IN FAST, AND TAKE OUT AS MANY AS YOU CAN!
SIR! BANDITS, 8 O'CLOCK HIGH! P-51S, 6 OF THEM COMING IN FAST!!



DAMMIT! IF YOU'RE STILL FLYING CALL IN!

GOOD JOB! WE KNOCKED DOWN ALL BUT TWO OF THEM! NOW LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!

GOD DAMMIT!!

YOU, IN THE MUSTANG WITH THE BLACK TAIL AND WINGTIPS. SOMEDAY ... YOU'RE MINE!

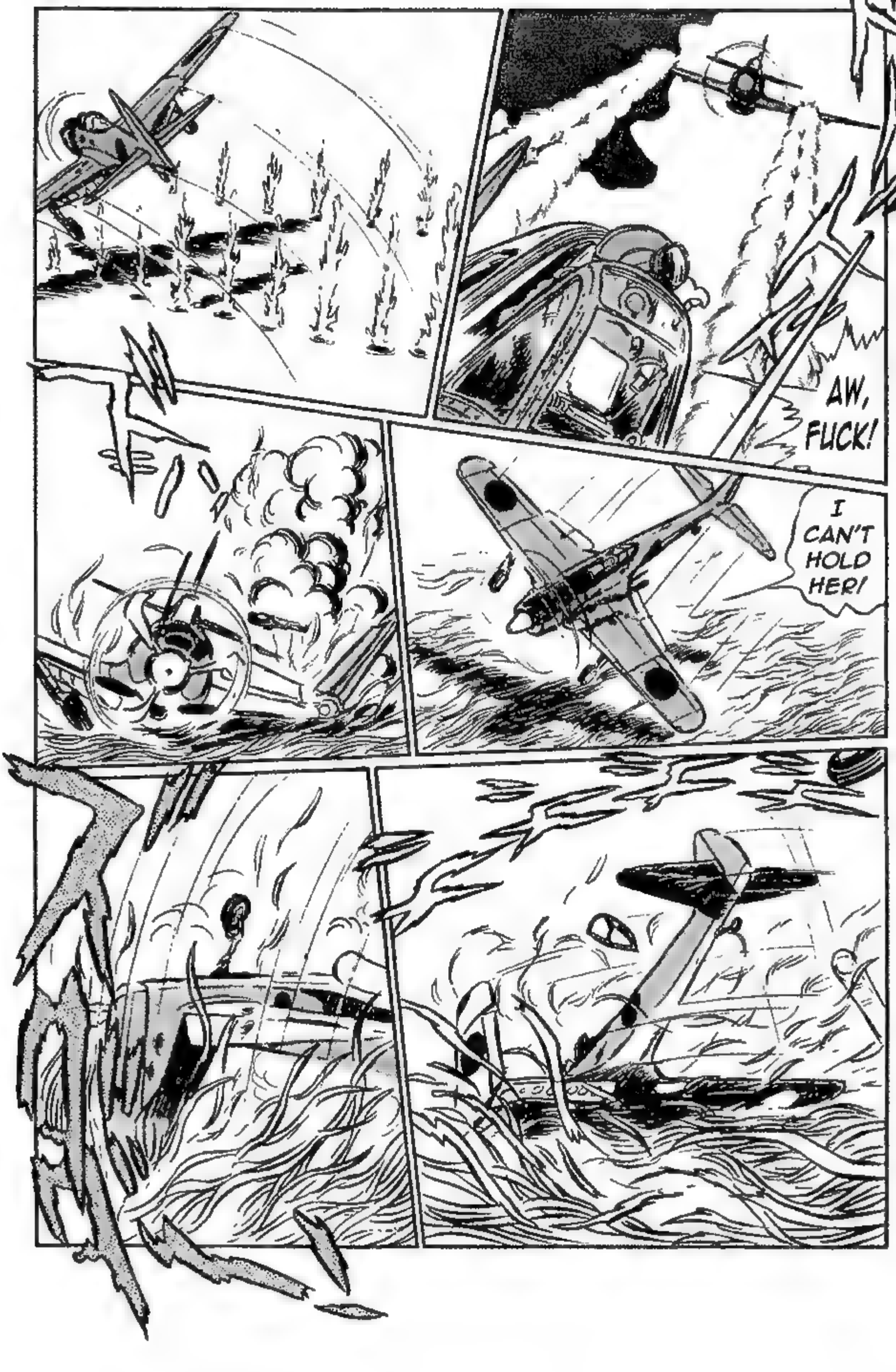
WELL, THAT BRINGS MY TOTAL UP TO 286 PLANES. UNOFFICIALLY, THAT IS.

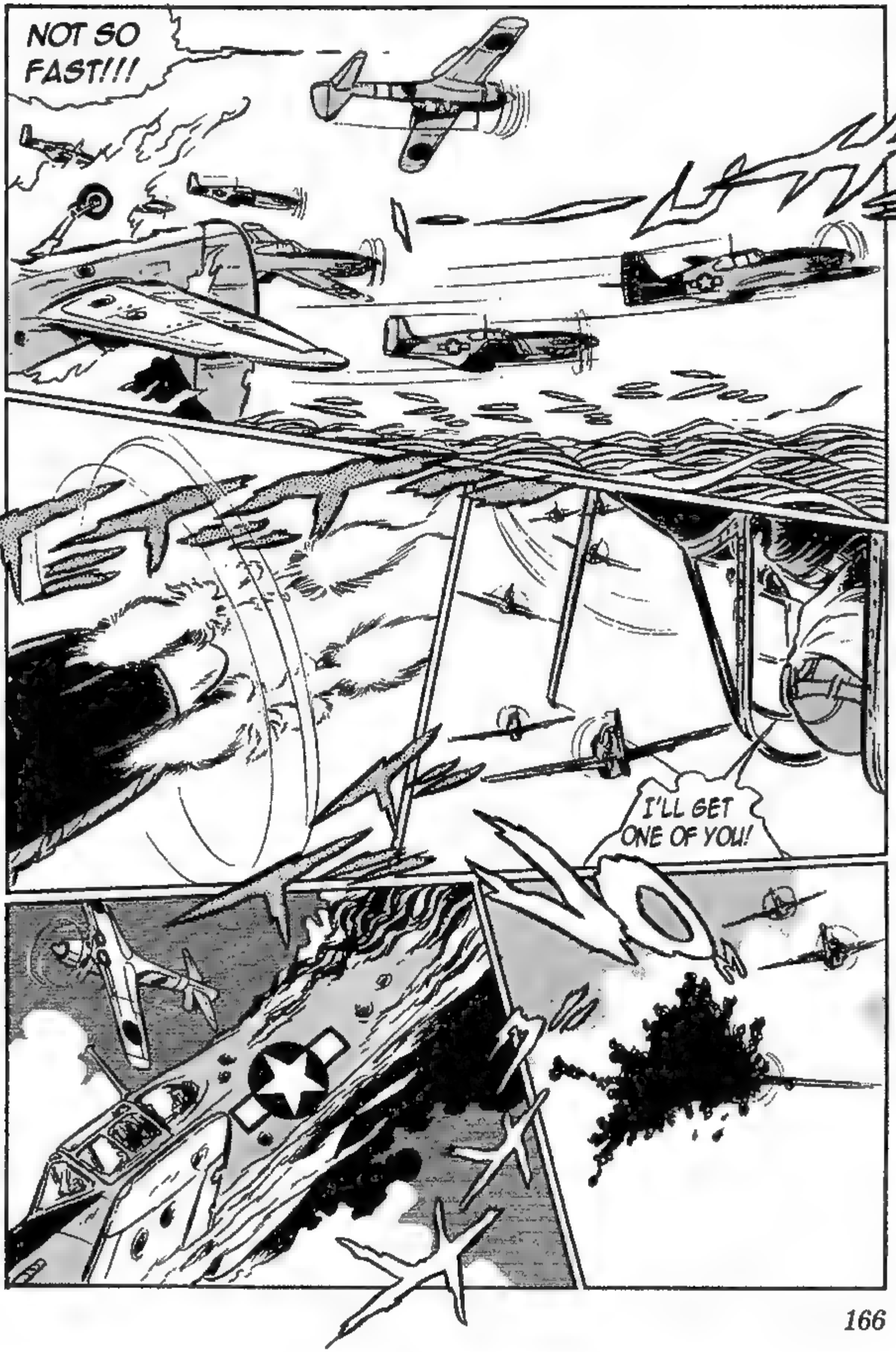
NOT IN THESE PLANES, SIR.

I'M GONNA GET THAT SUNUVABITCH SOMEDAY!

MEKONG SUNSET

I HEARD. THOSE P-51S TORE 'EM UP OVER THE RIVER.
THERE'S WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM.
OIL LEAK, OVER!
SHIMA, I'VE GOT ENGINE TROUBLE. CAN YOU SEE WHAT IT IS, OVER?
KAGEYAMA! PULL YOUR WHEELS BACK UP!! TO YOUR LEFT!!!
SHIT! THEY'RE BACK!


AW, FUCK!
I CAN'T HOLD HER!


NOT SO FAST!!!
I'LL GET ONE OF YOU!

LT. CAIDIN, SIR! THAT DAMN NIP GOT LUCKY!

WHO GOT SHOT DOWN, OVER!

HE ALSO KNOWS BETTER THAN TO FOLLOW US.

NO, HE'S GOOD. HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF US BEING SO CLOSE TOGETHER.

KAGEYAMA!!

OH MY GOD ...

PUT THAT FIRE OUT!

I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D GET IT.

OH, MAN ....

WHOA!

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN ME!

YOU LUCKY SUNUVABTICH! MUST BE AN OLD BOMB CRATER THEY MISSED FILLING IN.

I GOT THROWN OUT OF MY PLANE WHEN I CRASHED AND RIGHT INTO HERE!

IN THE SOAKING WET FLESH.

KAGE-YAMA?!

ME AN IDIOT?! THIS FROM THE GUY WHO TRIED TO TAKE ON SIX P-51S!

YOU FUCKIN' IDIOT! IF YOU'D LISTENED TO ME THEN YOU MIGHT HAVE SAVED YOUR PLANE INSTEAD OF ENDING UP IN THIS OUTDOOR BATH!

RIGHT BACK AT YA, YOU ... !!

OH YEAH?!? HOW'S THIS!!

YOU CAN'T EVEN THROW A GOOD PUNCH!

YOU SAYIN' I CAN'T FLY?!

YES SIR. WHEN WE CLEAN UP THANK YOU, SIR.

NOW AFTER YOU TWO HAVE CLEANED UP, I WANT ACTION REPORTS FROM YOU BOTH!

GLAD YOU'RE STILL ALIVE, KAGEYAMA. SHIMA, QUIT BEATING UP ON HIM.

HEY! THE TOWER'S LOOKING FOR YOU!

YES SIR.

NO ONE SAW 'EM UNTIL THEY WERE RIGHT ON TOP OF US!

ANYWAY, YOU'RE RIGHT. I DESERVED IT FOR BEING SHOT DOWN LIKE THAT.

BE GRATEFUL FIGHTING IN THE RANKS IS A SERIOUS OFFENSE.

HE ACTED LIKE HE DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE THE BLOOD.

C'MON. I'LL HELP YOU OUT. LET'S GET CLEANED UP AND MAKE THOSE REPORTS.

GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.

MAN, THE FIGHTS WE HAD AND THE THINGS WE PUT UP WITH TO BE THE BEST AMONG US.

WE WERE ALWAYS COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER.

CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY. ME? I HAD SIX BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS.

THIS IS WHAT I GET FOR BEING AN ONLY CHILD.

BECAUSE I'M HUNGRY, AND BEING THE ONLY SON ALSO MAKES ME THE #1 SON AND #1 SONS GET THEIR WAY.

IT'S A LIFE, I GUESS. KAGEYAMA, WHY ARE YOU EATING SO LATE?

THAT'S WHY I THE WAY I AM.

THE HOSPITAL SMELLS, AND I'D SWEAR THEY USED LEECHES ON US.

YOU KNOW, THE WORLD IS SO BEAUTIFUL WHEN YOU'RE UP THERE IN THE SKY.

GOOD POINT.

FURTHERMORE, I NEVER HAD TO SHARE MY RICE WITH SIX BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS.

SAME FOR MY FOLKS.

I HOPE SO. I'D LIKE TO SEE ALL OF THEM AGAIN.

MAYBE THEY'RE ALL STILL ALIVE.

I'VE LOST TRACK OF MY FAMILY DUE TO THE WAR. I HOPE THEY'RE ALL RIGHT.

MAN, BUT THIS PLACE SEEMS SO EMPTY NOW ....

NOW THEY'RE FLOATING DOWN THE MEKONG TO THE SEA.

REMEMBER HOW THEY USED TO LIVEN UP THE JOINT? THEY FOUGHT WORSE THAN WE DID EARLIER.

THAT REMINDS ME. YOU KNOW WHO SHOT YOU DOWN? "MISTER BLACK TAIL" HIMSELF, CLAIRMONT "CLAIRE" HORANOT, FORMER FLYING TIGER AND A CERTIFIED ACE PILOT.

ASSUMING SOMETHING DOESN'T EAT THEM FIRST.

I THINK THAT 286 KILL BUSINESS IS BULLSHIT, BUT I CAN'T ARGUE THAT HE'S A DAMN GOOD PILOT. HE WOULDN'T BE AN ACE IF HE WASNT.

THE GUY CLAIMS 286 KILLS, COUNTING YOU, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITS THAT NUMBER IS UNOFFICIAL AND THE U.S. ARMY WILL ONLY LET HIM CLAIM 39.

TRUE. WE HAD ALMOST SIXTY PLANES IN THIS SQUADRON BEFORE HIM AND HIS BUNCH SHOWED UP IN THEIR FANCY NEW MUSTANGS. NOW IT'S JUST YOU AND ME.

THE AMERICAN WAS FULL OF SWAGGER AND ALWAYS THE BEST. THE GERMANS WERE DUMB AND WE WERE STUPID.

HE SCARES ME. LIKE THAT GUY IN THAT CAPTURED AMERICAN MOVIE WE SAW LAST MONTH?

YOU KNOW, IF WE CAN EVER SHOOT DOWN THIS HORANOT GUY WE'LL MAKE MILITARY HISTORY!

I GET COLD CHILLS JUST THINKING ABOUT HORANOT!

... THE FIRST ROCKET FIGHTER, THE FIRST BALLISTIC MISSILE, AND THEIR TANKS ARE SECOND TO NONE! EXCEPT MAYBE THE RUSSIANS, BUT YOU KNOW!

DON'T GET ME WRONG. THE AMERICANS MAKE A LOT OF GOOD STUFF, BUT SO DO WE AND SO DO THE GERMANS. I MEAN, THE GERMANS HAD THE FIRST JET ...

BUT IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!

SMART ALECK. THE COMMANDER WANTS YOU.

SHIMA! KAGEYAMA! YOU AWAKE?

WE ARE NOW.

BUT SIR!

YOU STAY HERE, SHIMA! I CAN RISK ONLY ONE OF YOU. KAGEYAMA, YOU'LL PULL RECON.

I'LL DO IT!

THERE YOU ARE! GROUND RECONS SAYS BRITISH TANKS ARE MASSING ON THE NORTH SHORE AT BANDRUM. THAT MEANS A NIGHT RECON.

KAGEYAMA, YOU'RE YOUNG, I'M OLD! DON'T DO IT!

BUT I'VE GOT MORE EXPERIENCE WITH NIGHT FLYING!

THANK YOU FOR BEING HONEST, SIR.

... I FLIPPED A COIN.

YOU ARE THE ONLY TWO LEFT. FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH ...

RUN LIKE HELL! BYE!

KID, PLEASE! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO IF THE BLACK TAIL SHOWS UP?!?!

MAN, BUT IT'S DARK!!! WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO IF I HAVE TO BAIL OUT?

BUT SIR! THE ORDERS WERE FOR KAGEYAMA TO GO!

THIS IS SO STUPID! I SHOULD BE THE ONE TO GO!

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO FLY TOWARDS THAT DIP UNTIL I GET THERE.

THERE'S THE DIP IN THE TREES FOR THE RIVER.

BANORUM ... THAT'S TWENTY MILES UP THE MEKONG FROM OUR BASE.

I WONDER IF THE BRITISH CAN SEE THEM FROM DOWN THERE.

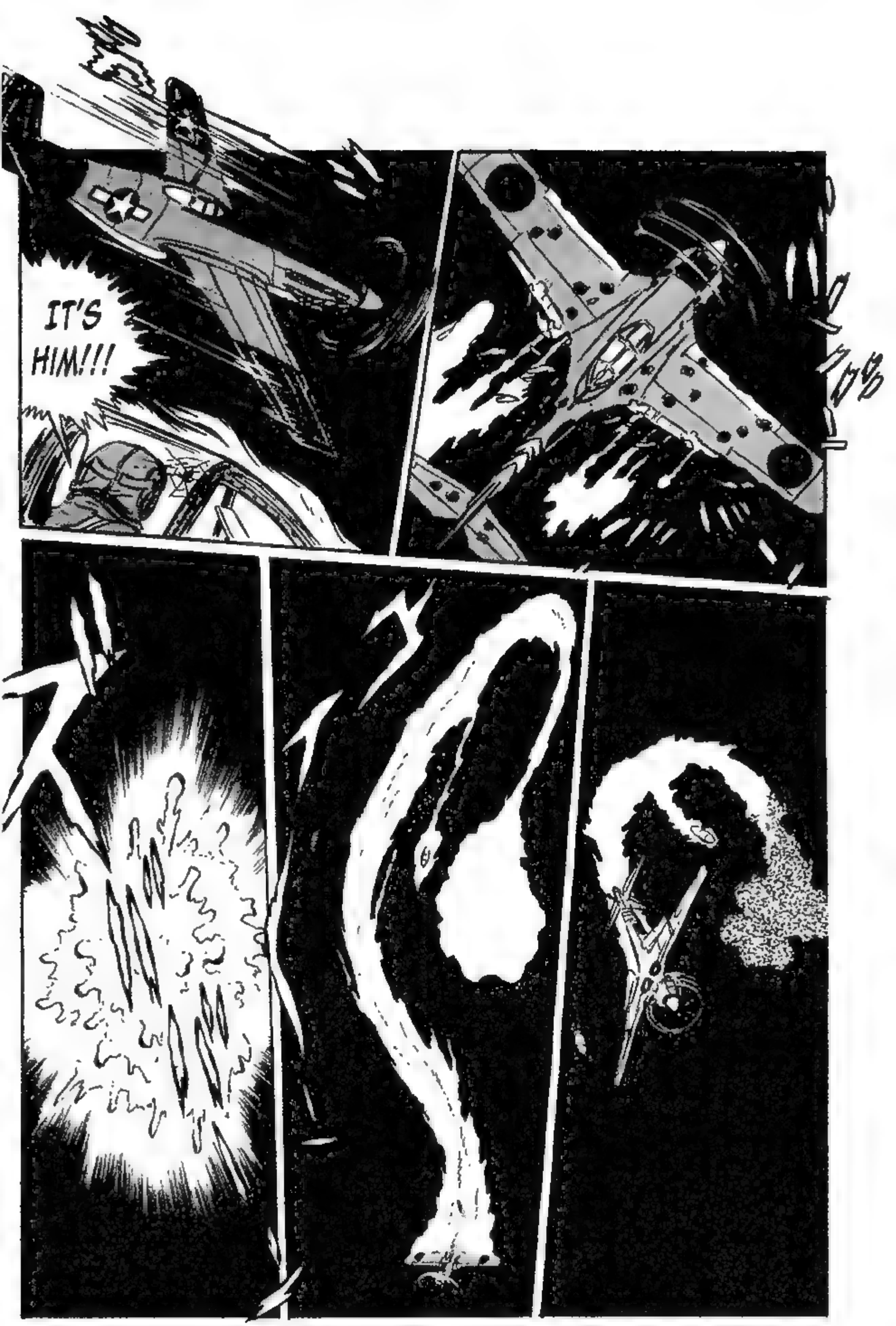
DAMN EXHAUST FLARES!

HOW AM I GOING TO DO A RECCE WHEN I CAN'T EVEN SEE THE TARGET?

ALMOST THERE. SHIMA WAS RIGHT. THIS IS DUMB.

OH SHIT!!!

I FEEL LIKE A KID IN THE DARK.


IT'S HIM!!!

... IT'S ... IT'S HIM ... IT'S ....

HEY, KID. GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.

SHIMA!

HOW ...

THEY THINK YOU BAILED OUT AFTER YOUR PLANE CAUGHT FIRE AND BEFORE IT CRASHED. OUR BOYS SAW IT AND GOT YOU BEFORE THE BRITISH COULD.

YOU KNOW, THEY SAY THAT RIGHT BEFORE THE END THE RED BARON GOT SO COCKY THAT HE STARTED TRYING TO GET EVERY EASY KILL HE COULD, JUST FOR THE NUMBERS.

SHIMA ... IT WAS HIM ... THE BLACK TAIL ....

OUR GROUND FORCES MADE AN ATTACK TO AVENGE YOU. KILLED TO THE LAST MAN.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

HE KNOWS THERE'S ONLY TWO OF US LEFT AND I'M MORE EXPERIENCED, SO THERE YOU GO.

AND YOU THINK THAT'S WHAT IT WAS, ME BEING AN EASY KILL.

WE GOTTA GET SOME OF THOSE NEW PLANES TO AT LEAST EVEN THE ODDS ...

THAT'S OUR PROBLEM TOO, YOU KNOW. SHIMA, WE'RE TRYING TO FLY OLD PLANES AGAINST NEW ONES.

... AND THEY GET K.O.ED EVERY TIME DUE TO THEIR THICKER ARMOR AND BIGGER GUNS!

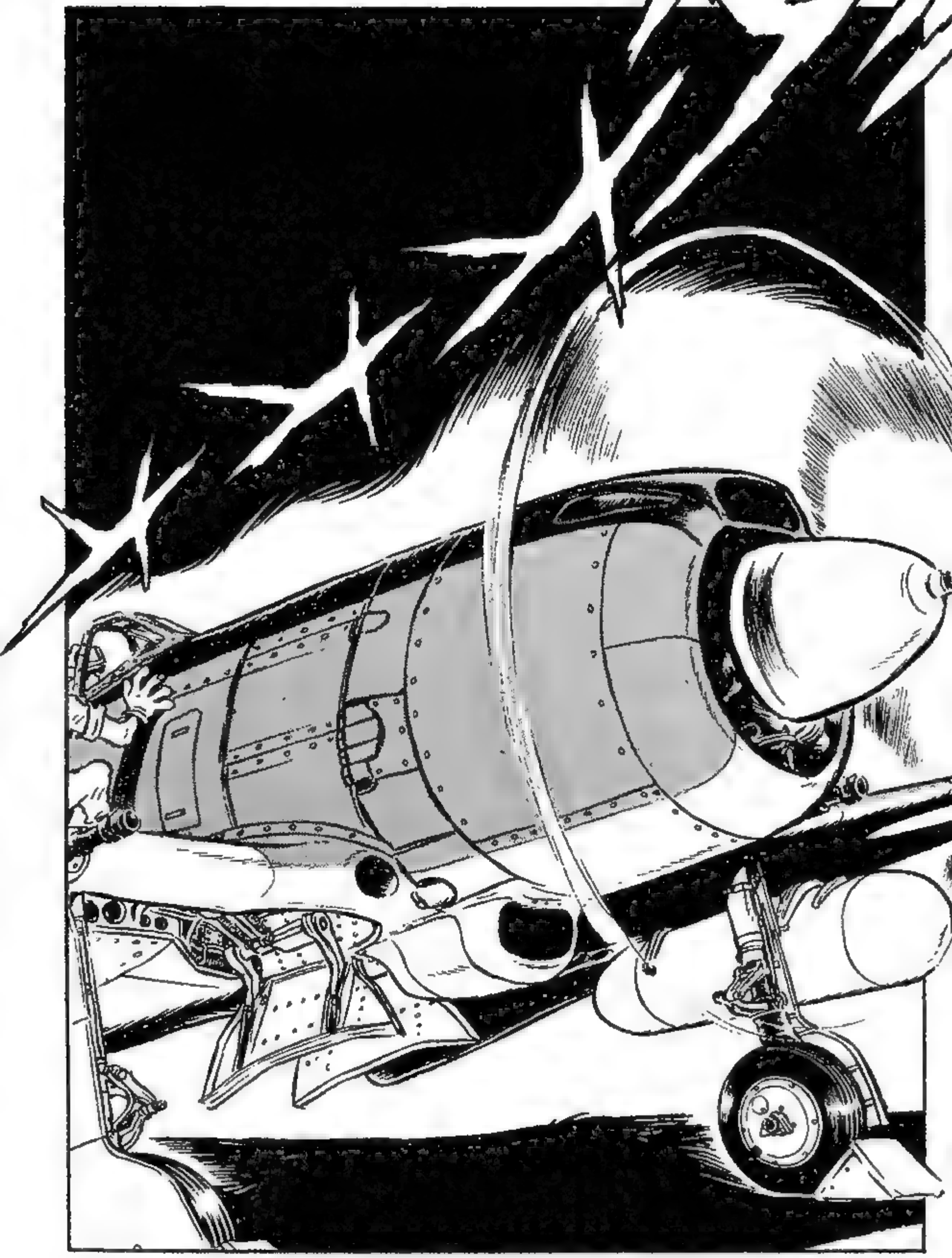
THOSE FOOLS KEEP PITTING OUR LITTLE TOY TANKS AGAINST AMERICAN AND BRITISH ONES ...

WE GOT MORE PILOTS AND NEW PLANES. HAYATES. AS GOOD AS P-51S.

WELL, KAGEYAMA OLD BUDDY, YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET YOUR WISH.

... OR YOU AND I WILL BE JOINING THE REST OF OUR SQUADRON IN THE MEKONG.

IT'S ABOUT DAMN TIME.



IT'S GOT MACHINE GUNS AND ALSO 20MM CANNON! WE FINALLY HAVE A BIRD TO EQUAL THE P-51 MUSTANG!

KAGEYAMA, THIS IS MY NEW BIRD. INTRODUCING THE NAKAJIMA KI-84 HAYATE. TOP SPEED 624 KM/H, THANKS TO ITS 16-CYLINDER, 2000 HP ENGINE!

THAT'S STUPID! HE'D BURN YOU!

YOU KNOW WHAT I'M FIXING TO DO? WRITE A CHALLENGE TO THAT HORANOT GUY AND HAVE IT SENT TO HIM BY SECRET MEANS.

BUT I WANT TO FLY ONE OF THESE RIGHT NOW!

HEY KAGEYAMA! GET BACK IN THE HOSPITAL! BAD BURNS LIKE YOURS TAKE TIME AND REST TO HEAL!

ARE YOU FUCKING NUTS?! AND WHAT WILL YOUR SIX BROTHERS AND TWO SISTERS DO IF YOU'RE DEAD?!

I'LL TELL HIM TO LOOK FOR MY TAIL SIGIL* NEXT TIME WE GO UP.

... ONLY I'M NOT AN ARROGANT SON OF A BITCH ABOUT IT. I GOT A FRIEND WHO KNOWS HOW TO WRITE ENGLISH. HE'LL WRITE IT FOR ME

NOT IF I'M FLYING A HAYATE. I'M JUST AS GOOD AS HE IS ...

(*) UNLIKE IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY PILOTS, IMPERIAL ARMY PILOTS WERE FREQUENTLY GIVEN THE LIBERTY TO PERSONALIZE THEIR AIRCRAFT WITH THEIR OWN CUSTOM TAIL MARKINGS, IN THE SAME VEIN AS THE "NOSE ART" FREQUENTLY SEEN ON AMERICAN ARMY AIR CORPS AIRCRAFT. THAT'S WHY SHIMA'S OLD AND NEW PLANES HAVE THAT FUNKY LOOKING SIGIL (SPECIAL SIGN) ON THEIR TAILS. NOW THAT YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN BE LOOKING FOR IT IN OTHER STORIES FROM *THE COCKPIT!* (R.M.)

I'M DOING IT FOR THE GUYS AND FOR YOU. REMEMBER THAT.
YOU'RE REALLY STUCK ON THIS, AREN'T YOU?
IF I DIE THEN I'LL COME BACK AS A HORSE AND PLOW FOR THEM.
YEAH. HEAL UP. SURE.
HEAL UP, KAGEYAMA MY FRIEND, OKAY?
IT'D BE BETTER IF I DID IT. HE DID THIS TO ME.
I'VE GOT THE SKILL AND NOW THE PLANE TO MATCH. IT'S DESTINY.
IT'S HORANOT'S SQUADRON, AND KAGEYAMA'S TAKEN YOUR PLANE!
SHIMA! WAKE UP!! ENEMY ON THE WAY!!!
THAT LITTLE SHIT ...
HE DID WHAT?!?!
(SNOT BUBBLE FROM SLEEPING)

KAGE-YAMA! DON'T DO IT!!

I MAY NOT BE AS GOOD AS YOU, SHIMA, BUT I'VE A BETTER PLANE NOW.

KAGEYAMA! YOU FUCKIN' FOOL!! GET BACK HERE!!!

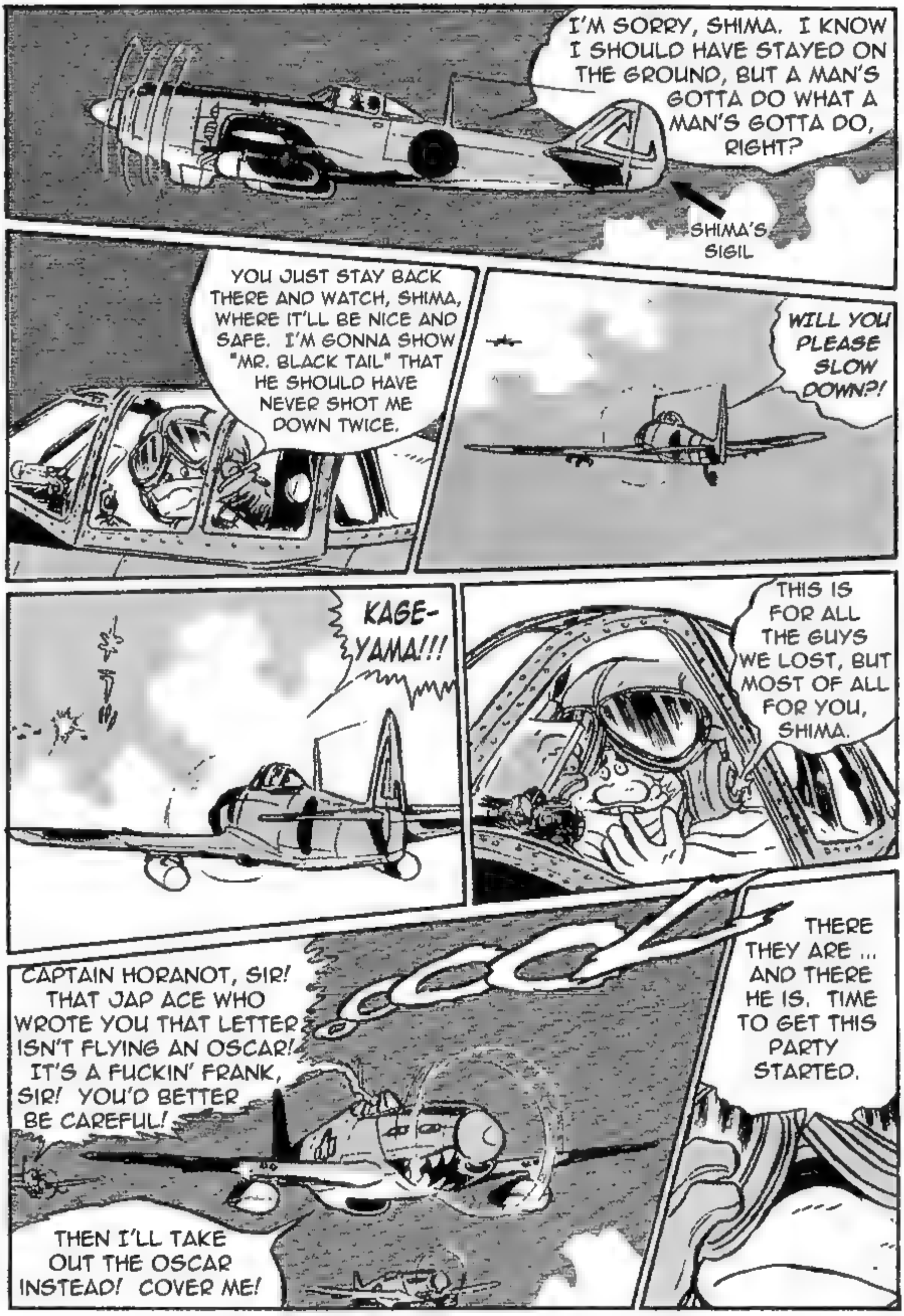
KAGEYAMA! THIS IS SHIMA! I'M FOLLOWING BEHIND YOU! PLEASE LET ME CATCH UP! OH, AND DON'T YOU DARE GET ONE SCRATCH ON MY NEW PLANE!

YOU HEAR ME?! NOT ONE SCRATCH!!

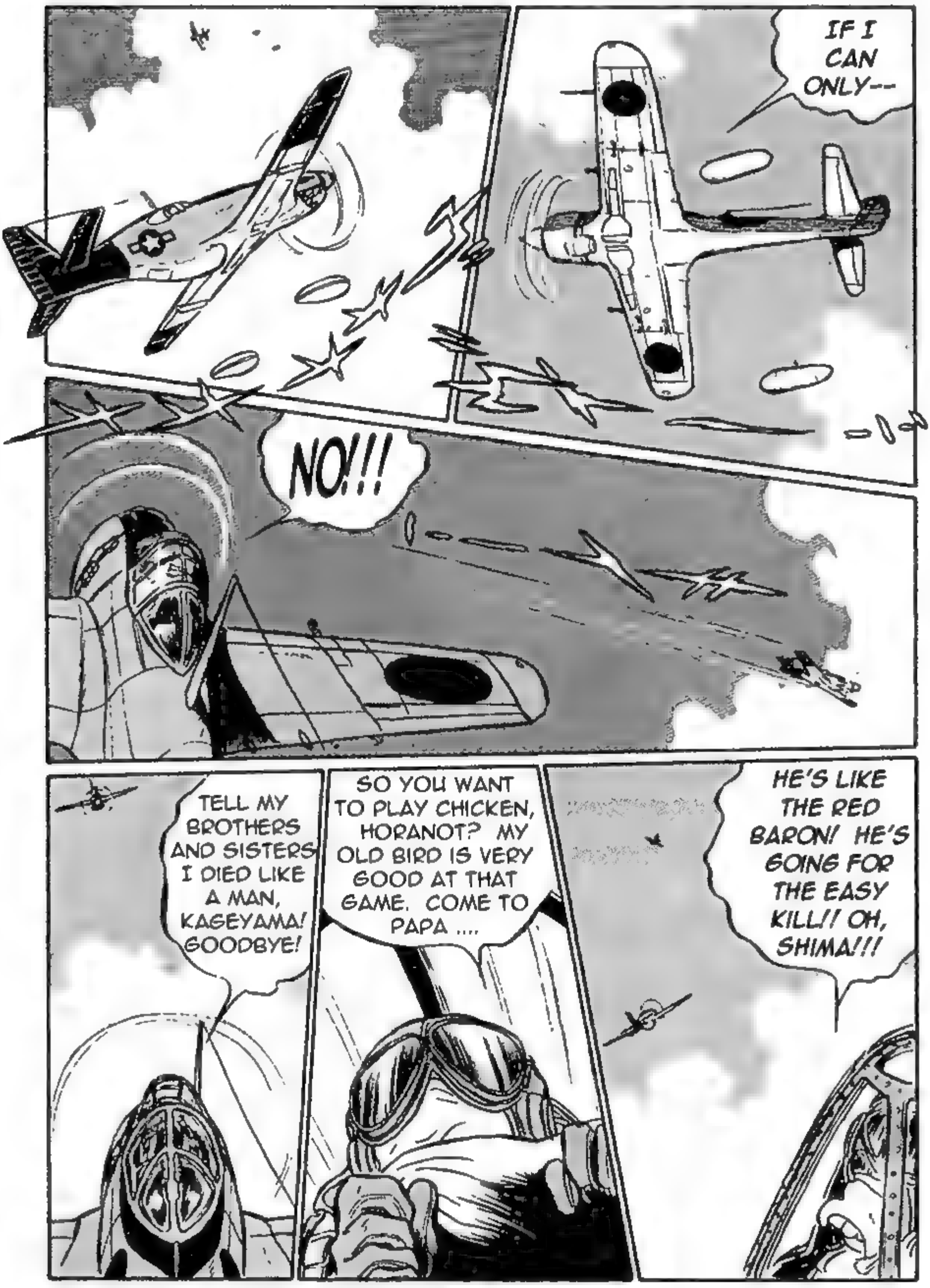
I'M GONNA GO HELP THAT IDIOT EVEN IF HE DOESN'T WANT IT.

GET ME A PLANE! ANY PLANE!!

MEKONG SUNSET


I'M SORRY, SHIMA. I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE STAYED ON THE GROUND, BUT A MAN'S GOTTA DO WHAT A MAN'S GOTTA DO, RIGHT?
SHIMA'S SIGIL
YOU JUST STAY BACK THERE AND WATCH, SHIMA, WHERE IT'LL BE NICE AND SAFE. I'M GONNA SHOW "MR. BLACK TAIL" THAT HE SHOULD HAVE NEVER SHOT ME DOWN TWICE.
WILL YOU PLEASE SLOW DOWN?!
KAGE-YAMA!!!
THIS IS FOR ALL THE GUYS WE LOST, BUT MOST OF ALL FOR YOU, SHIMA.
CAPTAIN HORANOT, SIR! THAT JAP ACE WHO WROTE YOU THAT LETTER ISN'T FLYING AN OSCAR! IT'S A FUCKIN' FRANK, SIR! YOU'D BETTER BE CAREFUL!
THERE THEY ARE ... AND THERE HE IS. TIME TO GET THIS PARTY STARTED.
THEN I'LL TAKE OUT THE OSCAR INSTEAD! COVER ME!

NOTE – DROPPING ANY EXTERNAL ATTACHMENTS INCREASES A PLANE'S MANEUVERABILITY BY REDUCING ITS OVERALL MASS.


IF I CAN ONLY--
NO!!!
TELL MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS I DIED LIKE A MAN, KAGEYAMA! GOODBYE!
SO YOU WANT TO PLAY CHICKEN, HORANOT? MY OLD BIRD IS VERY GOOD AT THAT GAME. COME TO PAPA ....
HE'S LIKE THE RED BARON! HE'S GOING FOR THE EASY KILL! OH, SHIMA!!!

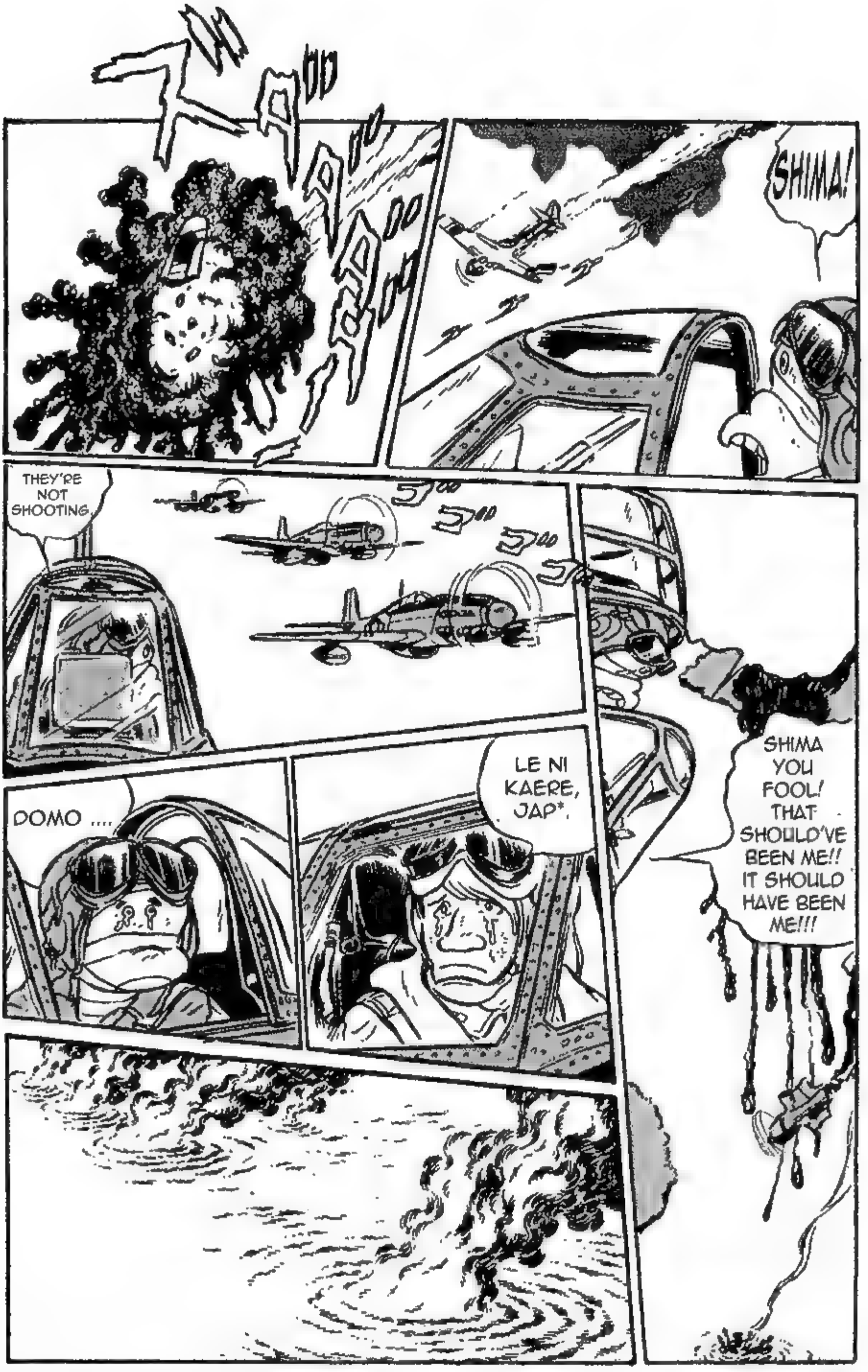
CLARE HORANOT! I AM YOUR ANGEL OF DEATH, COME TO TAKE YOU TO THE GREAT BEYOND!!

THIS FUCKIN' JAP IS CRAZY! HE'S NOT GOING TO BREAK! WELL I'M NOT GOING TO BREAK EITHER! I'M CLAREMONT HORANOT THE GREATEST FIGHTER ACE WHO EVER LIVED!! NOW YOU DIE!!!

KOOM

THE END

... SO ... SO
IT ENDS ....



"LE NI KAERE, JAP" – "GO ON HOME, JAP."
"DOMO" – "THANK YOU."

THE MEKONG STILL RUNS AS IT ALWAYS HAS CARRYING TO THE SEA WHATEVER FLOATS ON ITS TOP.

THE SHADOWS OF THE DEAD ARE STILL THERE, LIKE THE MAYFLIES THAT LIVE AND DIE ON ITS SURFACE.

WILL THE CYCLE EVER END? I DON'T KNOW.

END

YES, YES ...

GRANDPA, IT'S LATE. I'M GONNA GO TAKE A NAP.

YES, YES.

YOU ONCE TOLD ME THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE DIED IN THIS RIVER DURING THE WAR.

THOSE TWO YOU TOLD ME ABOUT, YOUR BEST FRIEND AND THE AMERICAN ACE. DO YOU THINK THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE?

YE-- .....

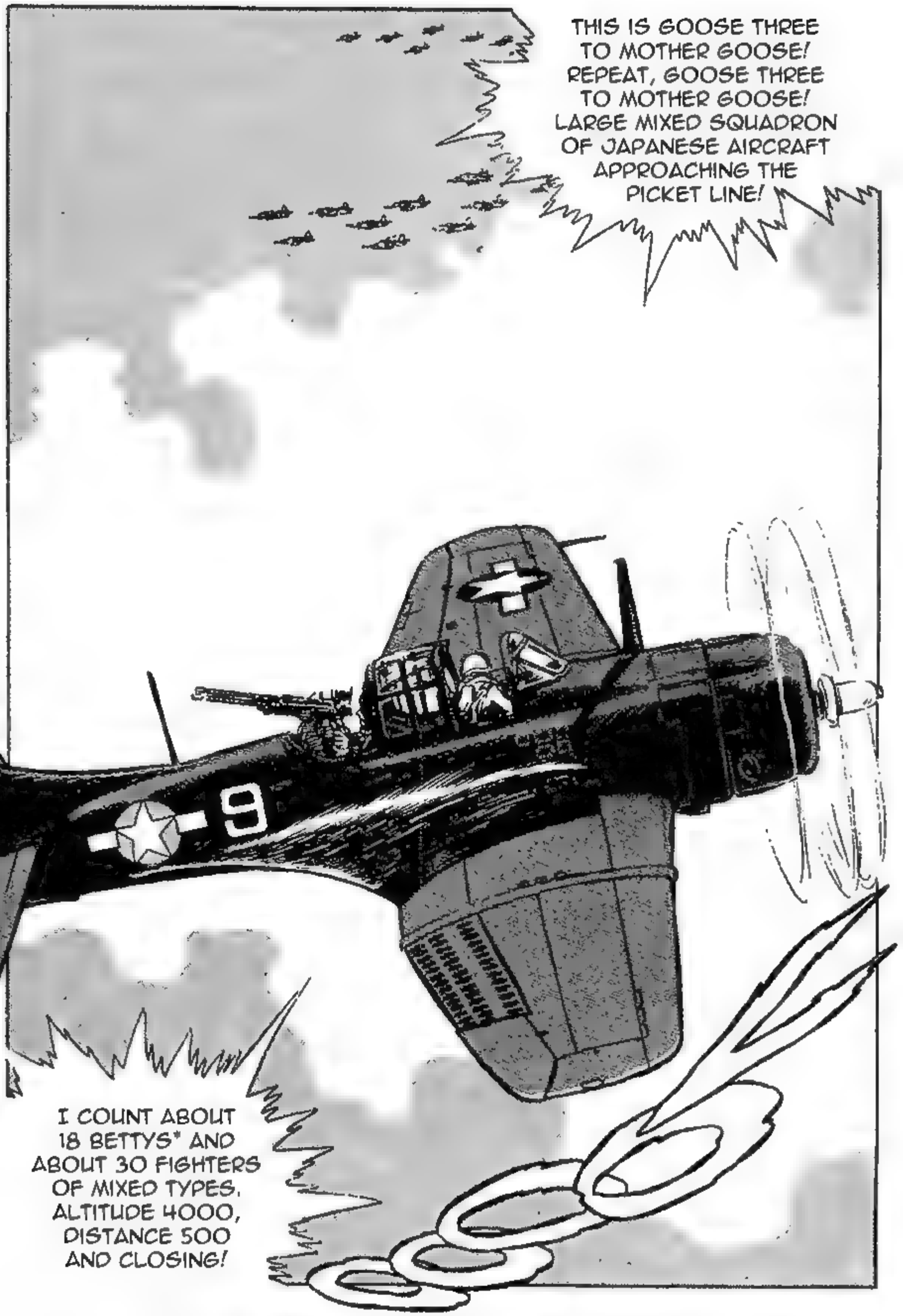
MEKONG SUNSET

<Published in Shonen Sunday, Issue 2, 1974>

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

THE COCKPIT

SONIC THUNDER ATTACK UNIT


THIS IS GOOSE THREE TO MOTHER GOOSE! REPEAT, GOOSE THREE TO MOTHER GOOSE! LARGE MIXED SQUADRON OF JAPANESE AIRCRAFT APPROACHING THE PICKET LINE!
I COUNT ABOUT 18 BETTYS* AND ABOUT 30 FIGHTERS OF MIXED TYPES. ALTITUDE 4000, DISTANCE 500 AND CLOSING!

(*) *BETTY* - ALLIED CODE NAME FOR THE MITSUBISHI G4M MEDIUM BOMBER, THE PRIMARY LAND-BASED BOMBER OF THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY AND WIDELY CONSIDERED ONE OF THE BEST IN ANY THEATER AT THE START OF THE WAR. THE JAPANESE CALLED IT THE *HAMAKI* (NI. "CIGAR") DUE TO THE ELONGATED SMOOTH SHAPE OF ITS FUSELAGE.

SONIC THUNDER ATTACK UNIT

764-14

SIR! AMERICAN RECON PLANE! TEN O'CLOCK LEVEL, RIGHT AT THE EDGE OF SIGHT!

FIGHTER GROUP THREE! SHOOT IT DOWN NOW! EVERYONE ELSE CONTINUE WITH THE MISSION!

764-15

CAN'T SHAKE THEM!!!
THIS IS GOOSE THREE! WE'VE GOT MULTIPLE ZEROS ON OUR TAIL!!!
FOR THE LOVE OF--
> STATIC <
GO!!
GET THOSE ZEROS AND GET THOSE BETTYS BEFORE THEY REACH US!!

WHOOOOOOOOOP!!!
WHOOOOOOOOOP!!!
WHOOOOOOOOOP!!!
DAMN! WE'RE STILL TOO FAR TO LAUNCH THE OHKA!
I-44
THEY'VE GOT THE BEST RADAR SETS OF THE WAR. THEY CAN SEE ANYBODY
YOU MEAN THEY ALREADY KNOW WE'RE COMING?!
AMERICAN FIGHTERS! AMERICAN FIGHTERS!!
NOT UNTIL WE GET IN RANGE!
CAPTAIN! YOU'VE GOT TO CUT ME LOOSE NOW! IT'S OUR ONLY--

ALL PLANES, ATTACK!!!

MOTHER GOOSE, THIS IS GOOSE LEADER! TARGETS IN RANGE! WE'RE TAKING THEM OUT! ALL OF THEM!!!

BONK!!

CAPTAIN, CUT ME LOOSE! IF YOU DON'T THEY'RE GOING--

WH- WHA--?!

ARE YOU THE OHKA PILOT THAT SURVIVED THE ATTACK EARLIER TODAY?

I-- YES SIR. I GOT PICKED UP BY A RECON PLANE AND BROUGHT BACK. I SHOULD BE DEAD.

BULLSHIT. IT WASN'T YOUR TIME. THAT'S ALL. NOW YOU'RE GETTING ANOTHER CHANCE. WANT A DRINK?

YOU ARE?
THE GODS MUST REALLY BE SMILING ON YOU TO LET YOU TRY AGAIN YOU KNOW? I GET TO TAKE YOU.
COME ON! MY CREW IS WAITING TO MEET YOU!
AND I'M PETTY OFFICER OKIYUMI.
I'M PRIVATE OKAWA.
PRIVATE NOGAMA.
PRIVATE TOY-AMA.
PRIVATE HATA.
I'M PRIVATE MATAGAMI
I'M LT. YAMA-OKA.
I'M LT. NOGAMI. THANK YOU.

COME TO THINK OF IT, HE'S THE ONLY ONE THAT'S CHOSEN TO DIE. THAT'S A PRETTY GUTSY THING.

JUST BECAUSE OUR SPECIAL PASSENGER TOMORROW IS A MEMBER OF THE JINRAI BUTAI* DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE GOING TO DIE TOO!

COME ON, EAT UP!

... AND REAL VETERANS LIKE LT. YAMAOKA BEING FEW AND FAR BETWEEN THESE DAYS, YOU KNOW?

DON'T KNOCK IT! I MEAN, WITH MOST OF US BEING HALF-TRAINED ROOKIES ...

I'M A GUY WHO SHOULD ALREADY BE DEAD, SIR. INSTEAD I'M THE ONLY OHKA PILOT WHO SURVIVED OUR EARLIER ATTACK.

YOU'RE LUCKY AND GUTSY, NOGAMI.

... AND ASSUMING ALL OF MY ROCKET MOTORS FIRE, I CAN SINK ANY SHIP THAT I HIT.

IT DOESN'T MATTER. JUST GET ME WITHIN 37 KILOMETERS OF THE TARGET. AFTER THAT ...

LET'S TOAST POOR TRAINING!

ONLY SIX OF YOUR ESCORTS CAME BACK TOO. THEY WERE LIKE DUCKS IN THE SKY.

IT'S GOT TO BE THIS TIME OR NEVER. I'LL DO MY BEST IF YOU CAN GET ME THERE TO DO IT, OKAY?

I WON'T GET A THIRD CHANCE.

THAT'S ALL I ASK OF ANY OF YOU.

(*) *JINRAI BUTAI* – NI. LIT. "THUNDER GOD CORPS," THE SPECIAL NAME GIVEN TO ALL PILOTS OF THE OHKA MANNED FLYING BOMB.

IS LT. NOGAMI IN HERE?

NO PARACHUTE THIS TIME EITHER. ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, I GOING ....

WE WILL DO OUR UTMOST, SIR!

WE WILL NOT FAIL THE JINRAI BUTAI TOMORROW! WE WILL BOTH GIVE OUR LIVES TO ENSURE YOU SUCCEED!

OUR MOST HUMBLE APOLOGIES FOR OUR PREVIOUS FAILURE!

IT CAN'T COURSE CORRECT.

THIS IS CRAZY, YOU KNOW? CAN'T THEY PUT AN AUTOPILOT IN THERE?

WHEW! I THOUGHT THEY WERE HERE TO PICK A FIGHT!

...

NOGAMI IS THE CRAZIEST OF US ALL! TO FLY A PLANE THAT'S BUILT TO KILL HIM!

THIS WHOLE WAR IS CRAZY, YOU KNOW? AND WE'RE CRAZY RIGHT ALONG WITH IT.

YES, LET'S NOT FORGET THAT PART! ALL HAIL THE INVINCIBLE JAPANESE NAVY! TORA! TORA!! TORA!!!

AND ALSO DESTROY ENEMY SHIPS TOO. DON'T FORGET THAT PART.

OF WHICH 16 WILL BE SHORT RANGE SHIDENS THAT CAN'T MAKE IT ALL THE WAY AND WILL HAVE TO TURN BACK HALF WAY.

WE'LL HAVE 24 HAMAKIS* TOMORROW ALONG WITH 40 FIGHTER ESCORTS.

I'M DRUNK, I DON'T CARE, AND I'M GOING TO DIE TOMORROW ANYWAY.

OH, DON'T GET CAUGHT SAYING SOMETHING LIKE THAT!

I WAS STUDYING TO BE A ROCKET SCIENTIST. ISN'T THAT IRONIC?

SO WHAT WERE YOU BEFORE THE WAR?

AT LEAST ALL OF OUR HAMAKIS WILL HAVE OHKAS. I HOPE EVERY ONE HITS A SHIP.

THAT MUSIC ... IT'S ... IT'S ....

(*) REMEMBER, *HAMAKI* IS THE JAPANESE NAME FOR THE MITSUBISHI G4M MEDIUM BOMBER, ALLIED CODE NAME *BETTY*.

NOTICE TO READERS - YOU CAN HEAR THIS SONG ON THE COCKPIT OVA SOUNDTRACK ALBUM. IT IS TRACK 23 AND ITS NAME IS "SCATTERED PETALS: MY LOVE WILL NEVER RETURN."

SHE MUST KNOW ONE OF THE OHKA PILOTS.

I'LL BE THAT'S THE SAME PERSON WE HEARD LAST NIGHT.

THAT'S BEAUTIFUL ... AND SO SAD ....

I GAVE UP ON WOMEN WHEN I JOINED THE JINRAI BUTAI. IT WOULD NEVER WORK OUT.

DO YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND, LIEUTENANT? IS SHE PLAYING FOR YOU?

IF ONLY THIS WAR COULD HAVE WAITED ANOTHER 30 YEARS.

SO YOU WERE GOING TO BE A ROCKET MAN. THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

BUT IN WAR WE ALL HAVE OUR DUTIES, DON'T WE? AND SINCE I COULDN'T VERY WELL SAY NO, WELL ... HERE I AM.

BELIEVE ME, I WOULD RATHER BE DOING SOMETHING USEFUL FOR HUMANITY LIKE THAT INSTEAD OF THIS.

FROM THE DAY I WAS A KID I WANTED TO BUILD A ROCKET AND GO TO THE MOON.

GOOD GUYS LIKE YOU, GETTING WASTED ON SHIT LIKE THIS ....

... I COULD HAVE DIED PEACEFULLY IN MY SLEEP. *SIGH*

THIS WAR SUCKS FOR EVERYONE, YOU KNOW? IN ANOTHER 30 YEARS ...

DON'T FORGET MACDONALD AND EDWARD EITHER. BOTH WASTED BY ZEROS.

IN 30 YEARS ROBERT COULD HAVE RETIRED FROM DISNEY AS A CARTOONIST.

ME, I THINK HE COULD HAVE GIVEN THOSE DISNEY ARTISTS A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY, HAD HE LIVED.

HE MADE US LAUGH WITH HIS SILLY PICTURES. HE HAD THE TALENT TO DO BETTER.

YEAH. THEY ALL LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE CARRYING TORPEDOES. THE ADMIRAL WILL KNOW.

DID YOU NOTICE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT THOSE BETTY BOMBERS WE SHOT DOWN TODAY?

THIS IS THE OHKA!!! THE HUMAN BOMB!!!

THIS IS ...

LOADED WITH 1.2 TONS OF EXPLOSIVE AND WITH A MAX SPEED OF 1,040 MPH!

THE CHERRY BLOSSOM! A HUMAN-PILOTED ROCKET AIRCRAFT DESIGNED AS A SUICIDE WEAPON!!

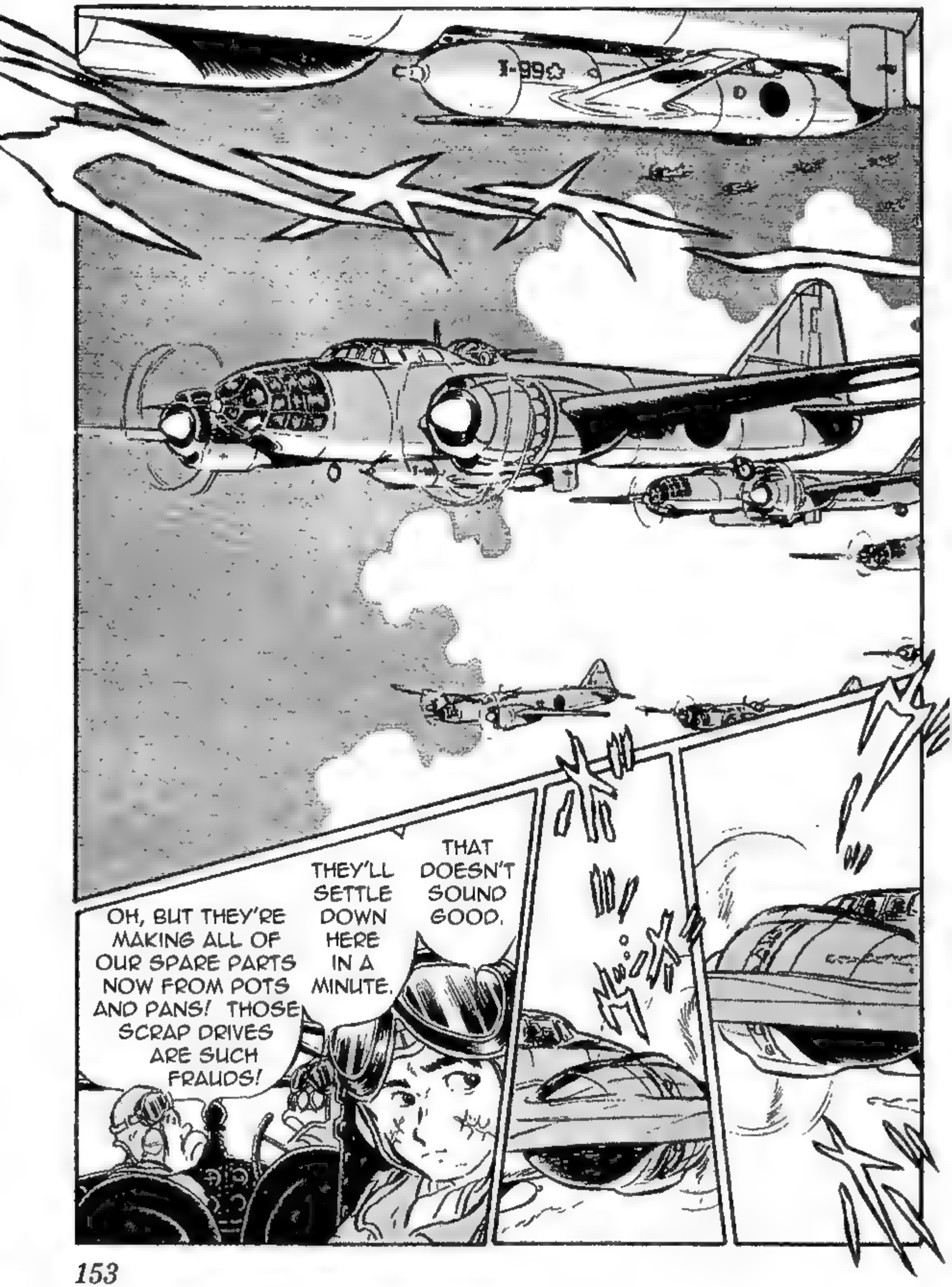
YOU AND YOUR MEN HAVE GOT TO INTERCEPT AND SHOOT DOWN THEIR MOTHER CRAFT BEFORE THEY CAN LAUNCH!

IT'S TOO FAST FOR US TO SHOOT DOWN, SO THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP IT.

WE'LL GET THEM, SIR! WE'LL GET THEM NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES OR WHAT WE HAVE TO DO!

BECAUSE IF EVEN ONE OF THOSE GET A CHANCE TO LAUNCH, IT'LL EASILY OUTRUN YOUR F6F HELLCATS, SO NEVER LET IT LAUNCH!

THAT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN SAVE US!


I-99
OH, BUT THEY'RE MAKING ALL OF OUR SPARE PARTS NOW FROM POTS AND PANS! THOSE SCRAP DRIVES ARE SUCH FRAUDS!
THEY'LL SETTLE DOWN HERE IN A MINUTE.
THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD.

PROBABLY, BUT THEY MAKE SO MUCH AND ARE ALWAYS MAKING IT BETTER THAT THEY CAN AFFORD THE WASTE!

HEY, DO THE AMERICANS HAVE THE SAME PROBLEM?

IF ONLY PEOPLE KNEW THOSE WERE MORE FOR LIFTING MORALE THAN ANYTHING.

THAT'S A VERY GOOD QUESTION. I'VE OFTEN PONDERED IT MYSELF.

I WONDER WHAT THE DESIGNERS OF THE OHKA WOULD SAY.

I MEAN, EVEN THE LIGHTEST AMERICAN TANK PUTS ALL OF OURS TO SHAME!

WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IS SOMEBODY FINDING THE GUYS WHO DESIGNED OUR CHEAP TIN TANKS AND TAKE 'EM OUT AND SHOOT 'EM!!!

THANKFULLY I NEVER HAD TO MAKE THAT CHOICE, BUT I KNOW WHAT THEY MUST HAVE THOUGHT.

IF I HAD STAYED AN SCIENTIST, I MIGHT HAVE HAD TO.

DESIGNING A MANNED ROCKET FOR DEATH, KNOWING ITS PILOT WILL ALSO DIE ....

THEY MUST HAVE BEEN SAD TO MAKE A ROCKET THAT MEN MIGHT HAVE RIDDEN FOR EXPLORATION, AND INSTEAD RIDE IT TO DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ...

THEY'RE PROB'LY EMPTY.

THEY'RE DROPPING THEIR TANKS!

THEY'RE AT THE LIMIT OF THEIR LIMITED RANGE. IF THEY START BACK NOW--

THE FLIGHT COMMANDER IS ORDERING ALL SHIDENS TO RETURN HOME.

THEY'RE A BRAVE BUNCH.

THEY ALSO JUST SAID THAT THEY'RE ALL STAYING WITH US! EVERY ONE OF 'EM!

GO GET 'EM GUYS! KILL EVERY ONE OF THOSE LITTLE YELLOW BELLIED SONS OF BITCHES!!!

ALL FIGHTERS IMMEDIATE LAUNCH!!!

INCOMING ENEMY FORMATION, 20 DEGREES NORTH, ALTITUDE 4000!

ALL RIGHT YOU NIPS! NOT ONE OF YOU IS GETTING THROUGH, DO YOU HEAR?! NOT ONE!!!

I'M GOING TO GO AHEAD AND GET IN NOW.

NO! WE AREN'T IN RANGE!! YOU NEED TO WAIT!

BUT IT'S JUST ME IN HERE. FITS LIKE A GLOVE.
IT'S SO CRAMPED IN THERE!
I JUST WANT TO GET USED TO THE FEEL OF MY COFFIN BEFORE I DIE IN IT.
DON'T WORRY. I'M WELL AWARE OF THAT.
I WILL. DELICIOUS. THANKS AGAIN.
BEST TO EAT IT NOW.
THANKS.
I MADE YOU SOME ONIGIRI,* SOME PREFLIGHT SHINSEN**, IF YOU WILL.
I'M SORRY, BUT I'M DOING THIS FOR ALL OF US ....

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(*) *ONIGIRI* - JAPANESE RICE BALLS, OFTEN USED AS A QUICK SNACK FOOD.
(**) *SHINSEN* - JAPANESE FOOD OFFERING, MADE ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS. (INCLUDING THE DEATH OF A FRIEND OR RELATIVE)

ENEMY THIRTY DEGREES TO THE RIGHT!

ATTENTION! ALL UNITS ASSUME COMBAT READINESS!

SHIDENS! THIS IS WHY WE STAYED!! GET 'EM!!!

THERE THEY ARE! SHOOT THE DOWN!! ALL OF THEM!!!

I DON'T WANT ONE OF THEM GETTING THROUGH AND LAUNCHING THOSE OHKAS!!!

WE'VE GOT MORE OF THE ENEMY TO OUR REAR!

ALL MACHINE GUNNERS TO YOUR POSITIONS!

LOOKS LIKE THIS SHOW IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!

THEY GOT THE COM-MANDER!

HE'S NOT GIVING UP AND WE CAN'T SHAKE HIM OFF!!

AWWW, CRAP! ONE OF THE AMERICANS FOLLOWED US IN!

LET'S FIND COVER IN THIS CLOUD BANK!

HE GOT THE WING FUEL TANKS! WE'RE STREAMING FUEL!!

WE'RE HIT! RIGHT WING!!

LIEUTENANT! CUT ME LOOSE! GET RID OF MY EXCESS WEIGHT AND SAVE YOURSELVES!

NOTHING DOING! WE HAVEN'T SIGHTED THE ENEMY FLEET YET AND I'M NOT CUTTING YOU LOOSE UNTIL WE DO!

HERE COMES THAT AMERICAN AGAIN!!

SHUT UP AND LET ME FLY!

SIR! YOU'RE GOING TO BE SHOT DOWN BEFORE YOU CAN--

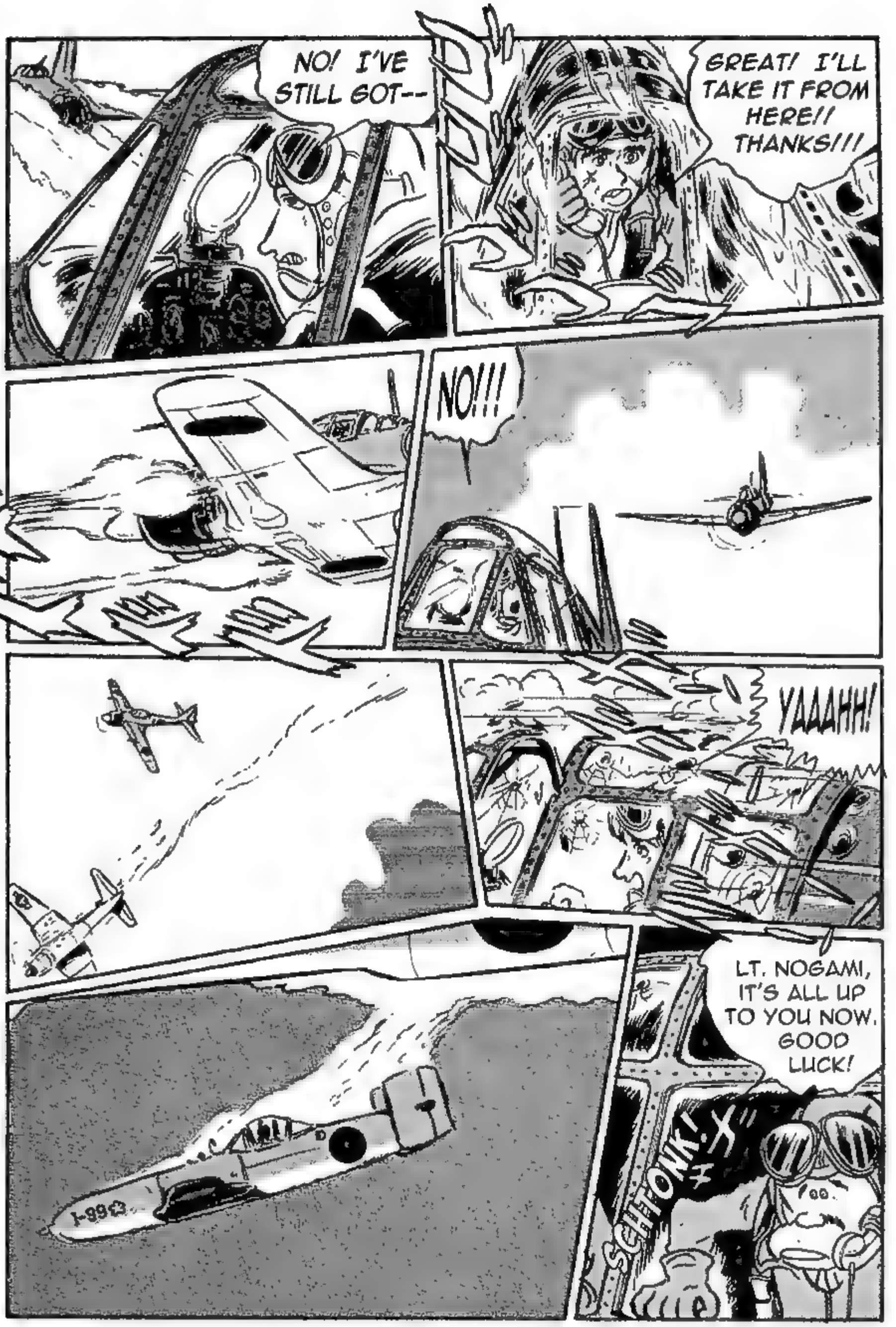
IDIOT. SO THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT THE "BAKA* BOMB"

HEAR THAT, NOGAMI?! I GOT YOU HERE LIKE I SAID I WOULD!!

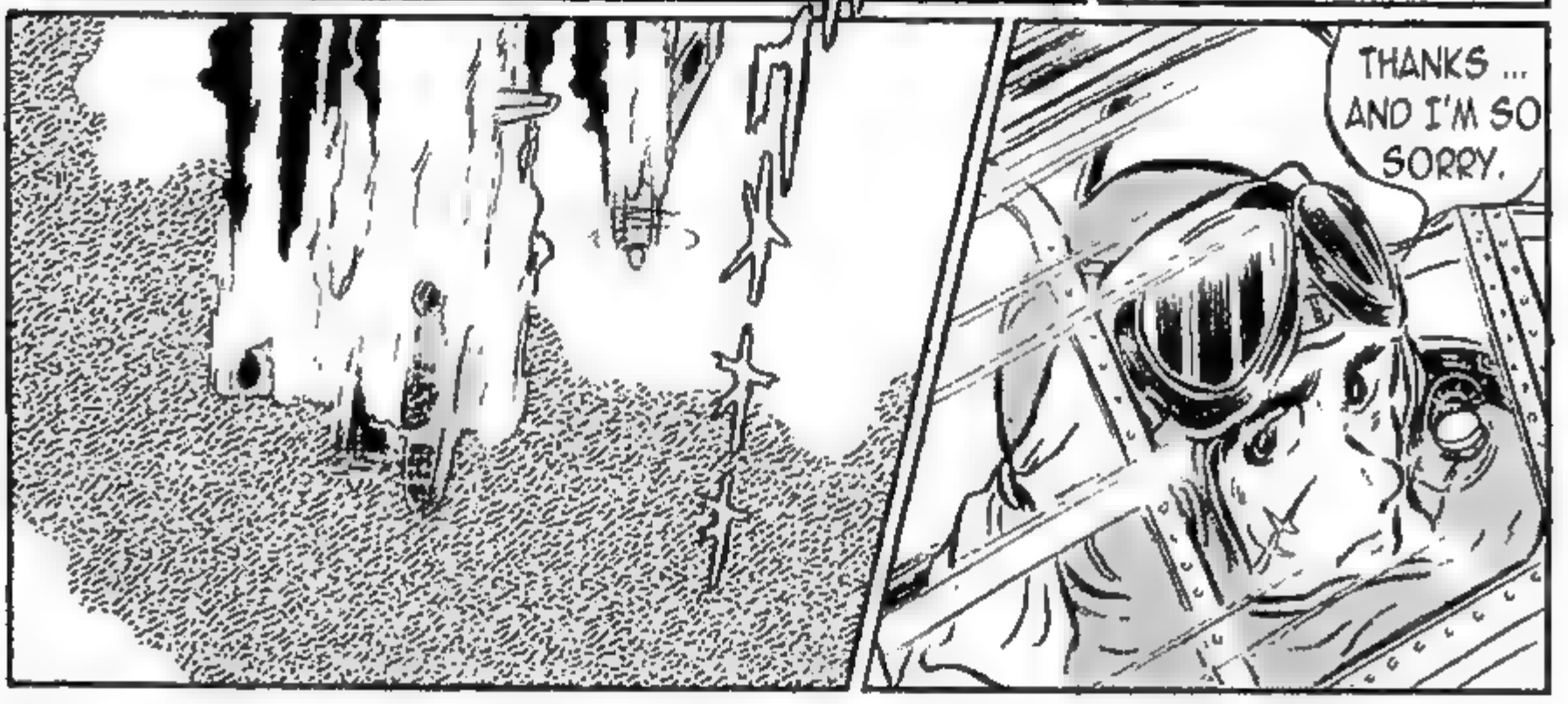
IT'S THE AMERICAN FLEET, SIR!!!

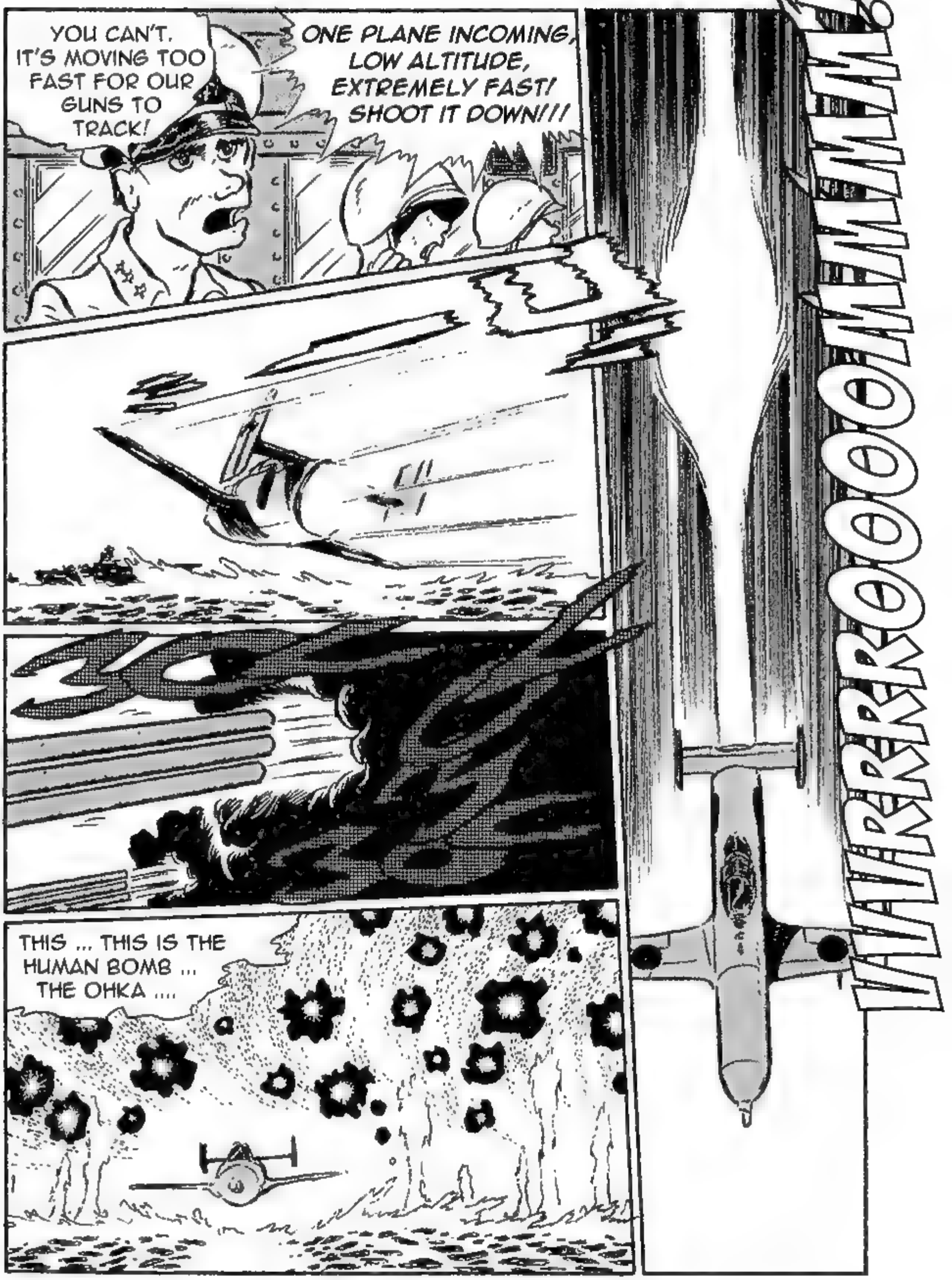
WHA-?

(*) BAKA - JAPANESE DEROGATRY ANALOG OF "FOOL," "IDIOT," "MORON," OR THE LIKE. A GOOD EXAMPLE IS *BAKA NO DESU*, LIT. "YOU STUPID FOOL."


NO! I'VE STILL GOT--
GREAT! I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE!! THANKS!!!
NO!!!
YAAAHH!
LT. NOGAMI, IT'S ALL UP TO YOU NOW. GOOD LUCK!
SCHTONK!
J-99

VARROOOM!!!
VRRRRROOOOOMMMM!!!!!
HE IGNITED ALL OF HIS ROCKETS AT ONCE! THEY'LL NEVER SHOOT HIM DOWN NOW!!!


THANKS ... AND I'M SO SORRY.


YOU CAN'T. IT'S MOVING TOO FAST FOR OUR GUNS TO TRACK!
ONE PLANE INCOMING, LOW ALTITUDE, EXTREMELY FAST! SHOOT IT DOWN!!!
THIS ... THIS IS THE HUMAN BOMB ... THE OHKA ....
WARRRROOOO

KA-WHA-M!!!

LOOKS JAPANESE ... MUST HAVE BELONGED TO THAT PILOT!

WHAT'S THIS?

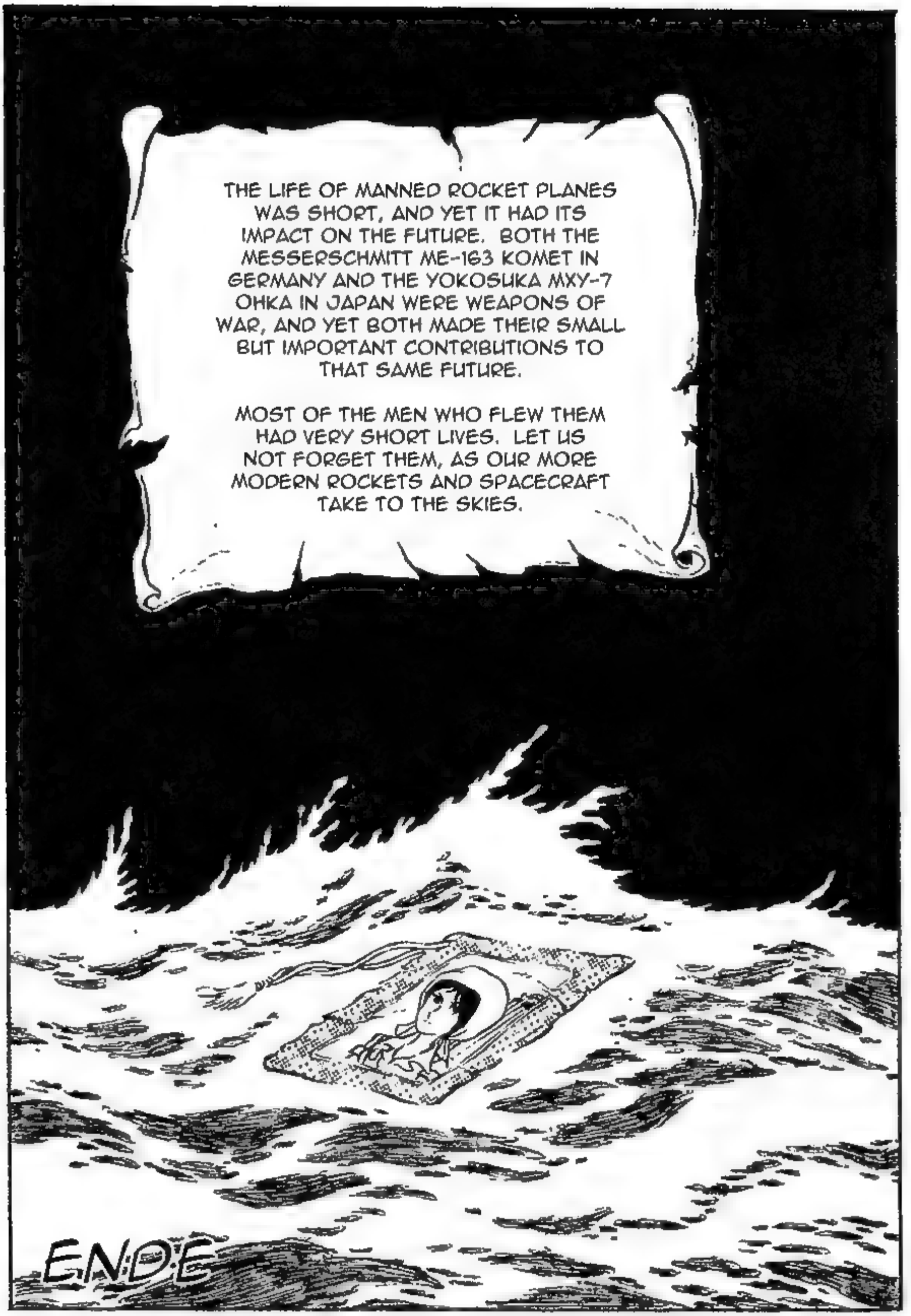
HE ... HE MUST HAVE BROKEN THE SPEED OF SOUND! THAT'S A SONIC BOOM WE'RE HEARING!

RUMBLE

SIR! THIS JUST CAME IN! A B-29 HAS DROPPED AN ATOMIC BOMB ON HIROSHIMA!!

SO THE WAR IS OVER. WHAT MADNESS ....

... ALL OF US ... TOTAL, UTTER MADNESS ....


THE LIFE OF MANNED ROCKET PLANES WAS SHORT, AND YET IT HAD ITS IMPACT ON THE FUTURE. BOTH THE MESSERSCHMITT ME-163 KOMET IN GERMANY AND THE YOKOSUKA MXY-7 OHKA IN JAPAN WERE WEAPONS OF WAR, AND YET BOTH MADE THEIR SMALL BUT IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THAT SAME FUTURE.
MOST OF THE MEN WHO FLEW THEM HAD VERY SHORT LIVES. LET US NOT FORGET THEM, AS OUR MORE MODERN ROCKETS AND SPACECRAFT TAKE TO THE SKIES.
E.N.D.E

<Published in Weekly Shonen Sunday, Issue 15, 1974>

ENEMY FORMATION DETECTED! HEADING 1200, ALTITUDE 7500, SPEED 480 KM/H. APPROXIMATELY 60 AIRCRAFT DETECTED. APPEAR TO BE BOMBERS WITH FIGHTER ESCORT!

BLACK WIDOW:
THE DEMON MACHINE

SHINJO RADIO STATION HERE! WE'RE ON FIRE FROM ENEMY BOMBING!

RADAR SHACK 3 HERE! WE'VE HAD TO SHUT DOWN! ANTENNA AND EQUIPMENT DAMAGED!

SOLID CLOUD COVER! AIN'T RADAR BOMBING GREAT?!

M 421

HA-HAH! WE CAN SEE THEM BUT THEY CAN'T SEE US!

THERE WOULDN'T BE, OF COURSE! THE SQUADRON LEADER'S IN TOUCH WITH THEM NOW!

HEY, WHERE'S OUR SPECIAL EYES AND EARS? THERE'S NO SIGN OF HIM.

... OH YEAH, THERE HE IS! I'D-A NEVER SEEN HIM!

LOOK UP.

DAMN, BUT THESE INSECTS ARE LOUD! DO THEY HAVE TO CARRY ON WITH THAT RACKET ALL THE TIME?!

IT'S ALL THEY'VE GOT TO DO. YOU'LL GET USED TO IT.

THAT AND EAT EACH OTHER. IS IT READY YET?

NOPE. NOT YET.

HEY, THESE OLD SIGNS ARE IN ENGLISH!

ALL OF THEM CAME FROM AIRFIELDS WE CAPTURED AND RENAMED AS OUR OWN.

I'D BE THE AMERICANS WOULD BE PISSED TO SEE THIS.

THERE THEY GO. OFF TO BOMB THEM BACK IN KIND, I HOPE.

WE'VE GOT TIME TO BOMB THEM BEFORE THEIRS GET BACK. AFTER ALL, THEY'RE ONLY 500 KILOMETERS AWAY.

AH, IT'S READY! GOOD! YEAH, RADAR HAD THEIR BOMBERS UNTIL IT WAS KNOCKED OUT.

COME ON, EVERYONE, DIG IN! I WANT NO LEFTOVERS, CLEAR?

YOU MAKE IT SOUND SO SHORT AND DON'T FORGET GOING OVER THE OCEAN TOO.

HEY! THOSE DRIED SARDINES ARE MINE! DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH THEM!

YOU CAN HAVE THEM! BLERGH!

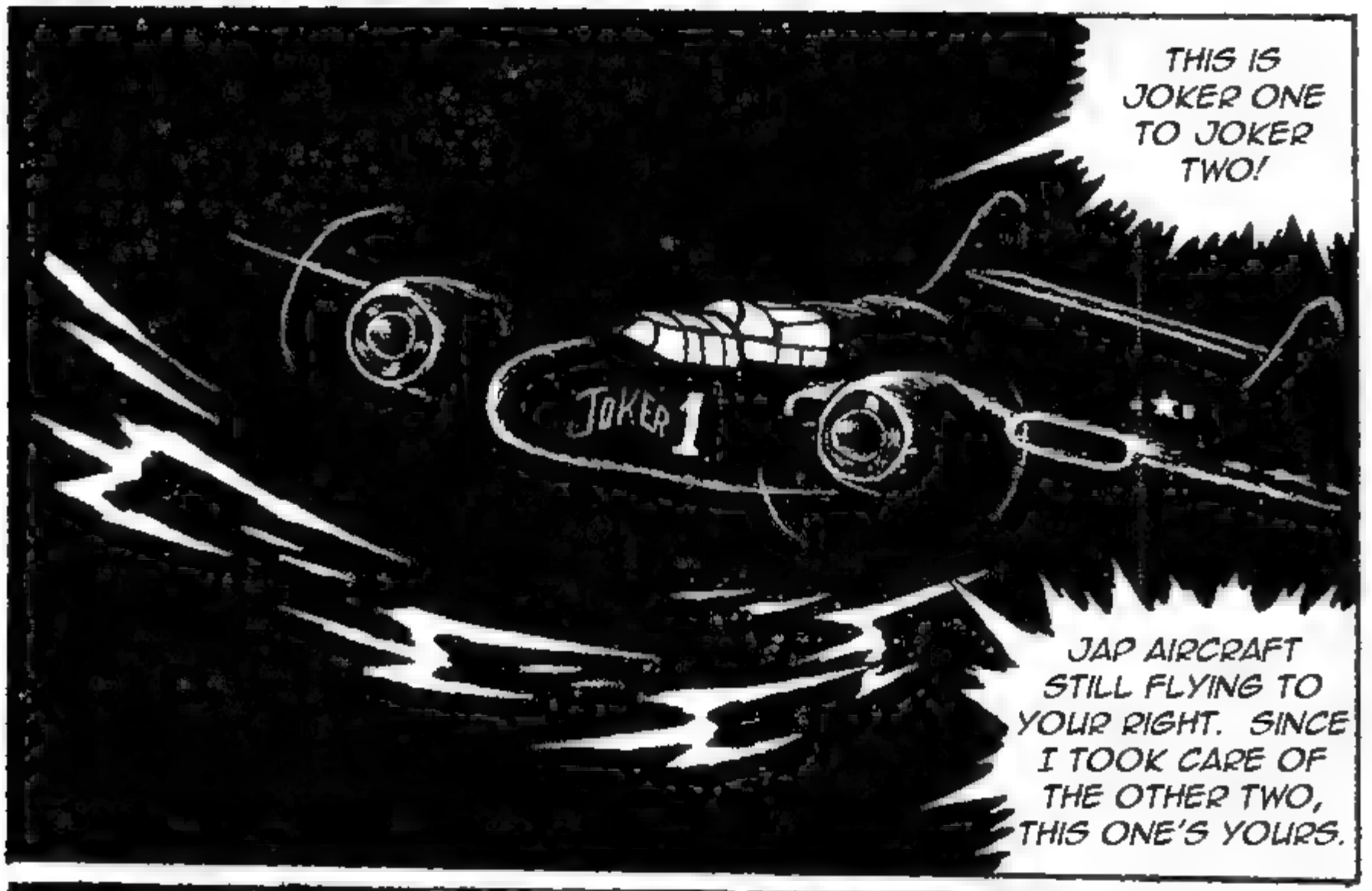
YEAH! WE DON'T KNOW WHEN WE'LL EAT THIS GOOD AGAIN!

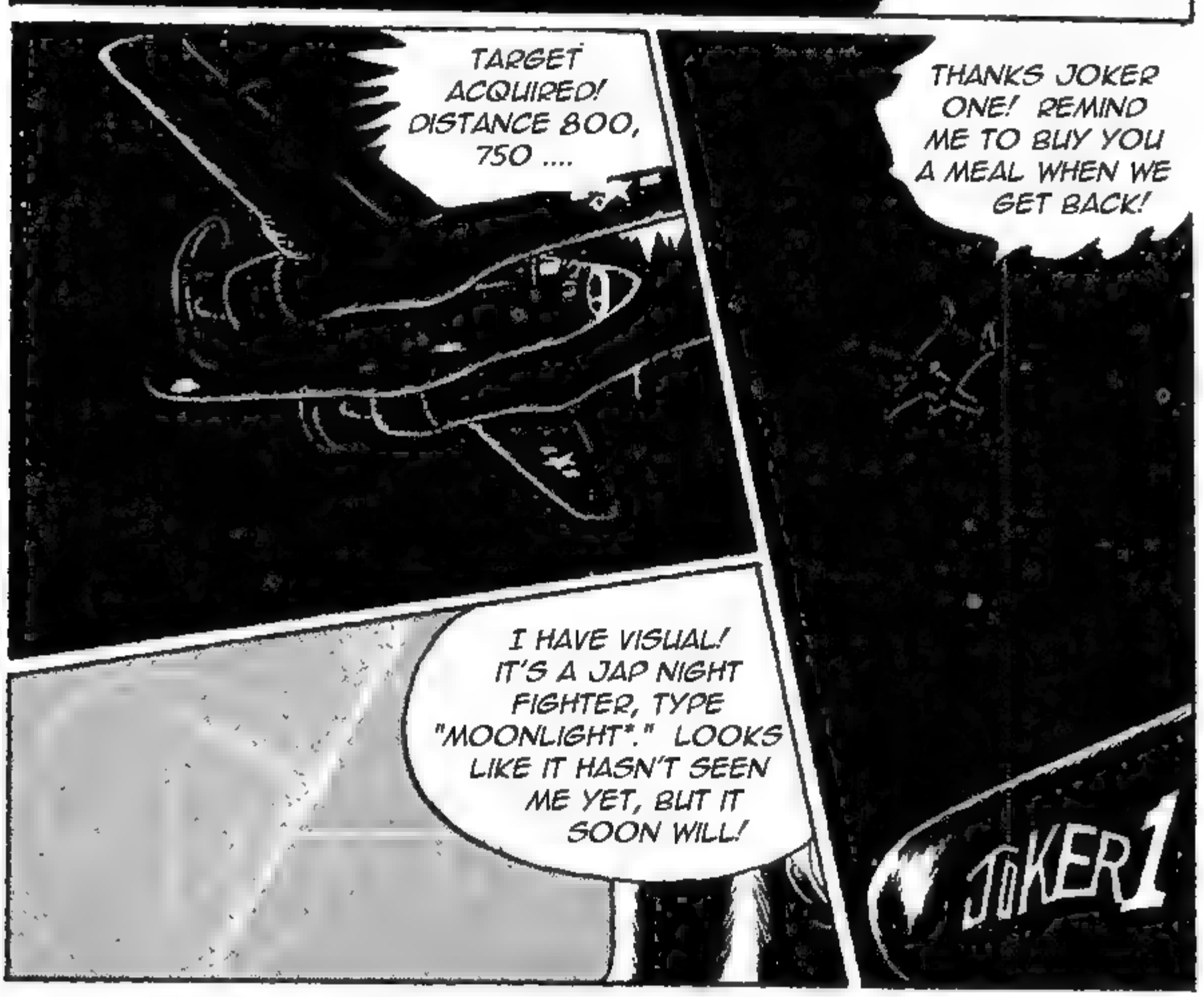
AS LONG AS THEY'RE CAREFUL, AND IF THERE ARE NO BLACK WIDOWS LURKING ABOUT UP THERE.

THINK THEY CAN PULL IT OFF?

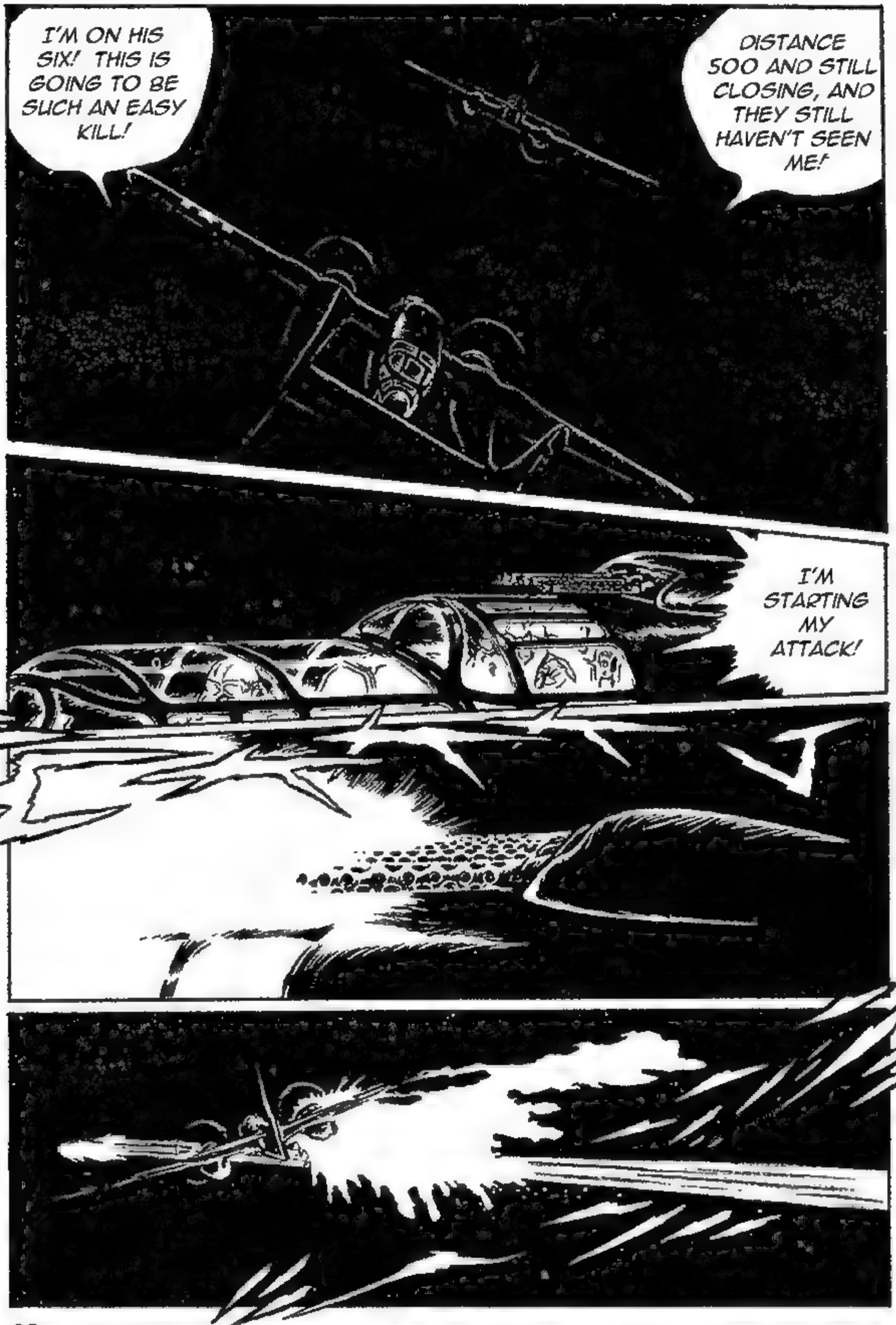
DAMN B-25S! AND IT WAS SUCH A GOOD MEAL!
HEY! GET THIS THING OFF OF ME!! I DIDN'T ORDER ELEPHANT EAR SALAD!!!
JUST FOR ONCE I'D LIKE TO ENJOY MY FIRST GOOD MEAL IN A WHILE WITHOUT BOMBS ON THE SIDE!
DOES IT MATTER, WITH THEM HAVING RADAR SO MUCH BETTER THAN OURS? IT MAY AS WELL BE BROAD DAYLIGHT!
THERE THEY GO, AND HERE COME THE CLOUDS AGAIN.

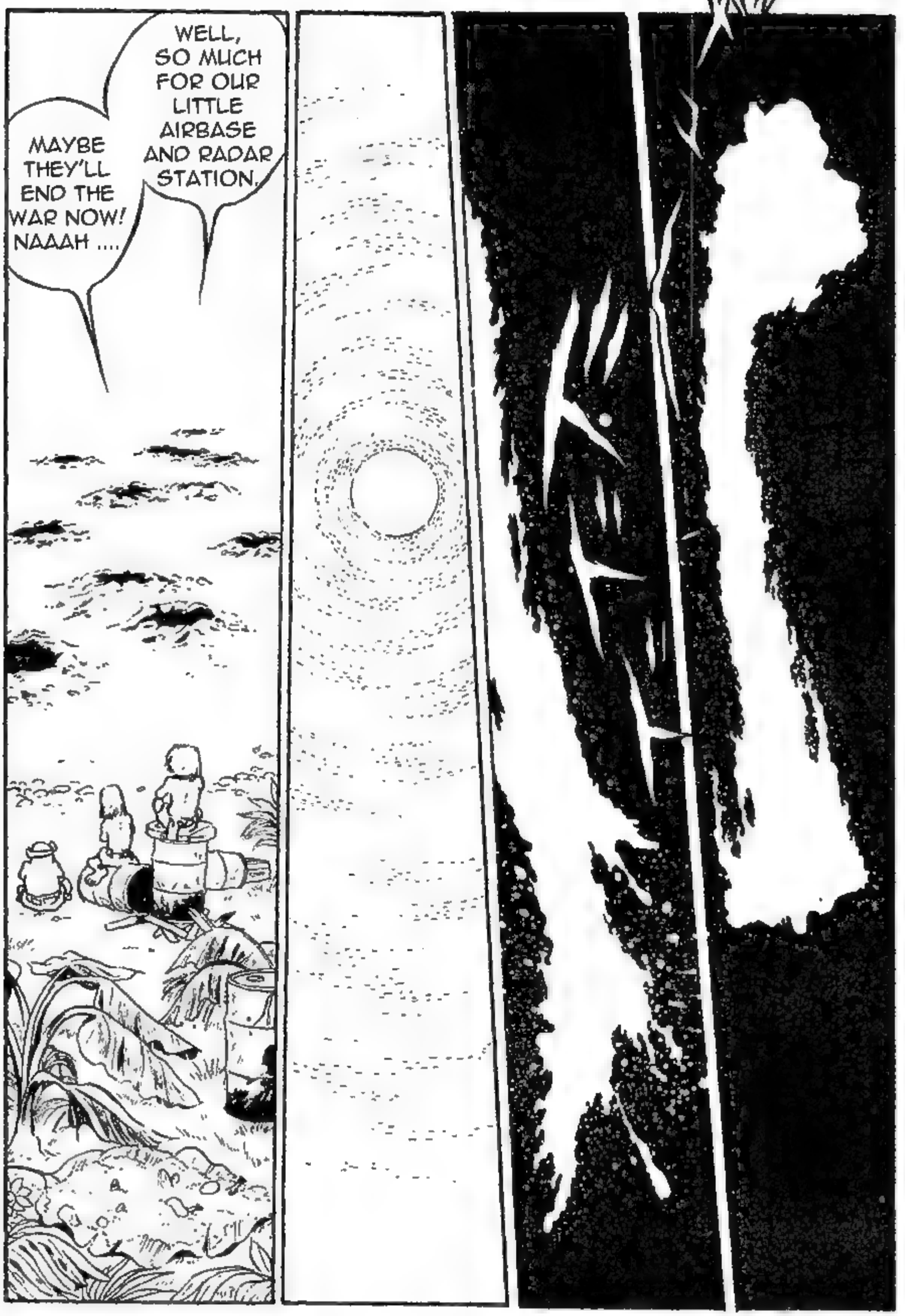
WELL, WE GOT ALL THE FIRES PUT OUT AND THE WORST OF IT CLEANED UP. I'M AFRAID, THOUGH, THAT THE MESS HALL IS NEVER GOING TO BE THE SAME AGAIN.
IF ONLY THAT HAD BEEN THE ONLY CASUALTY FROM THAT BOMBING.

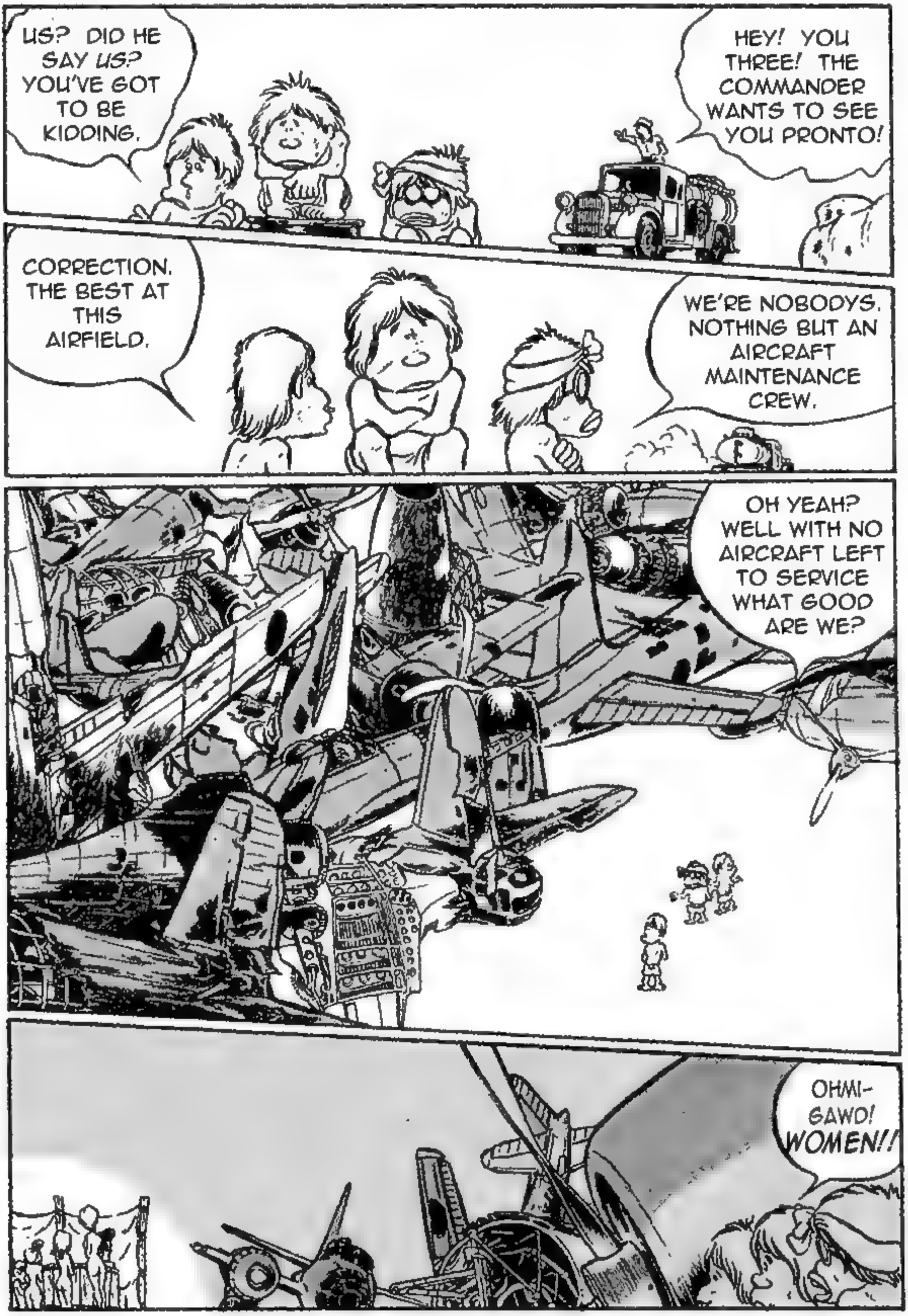

THIS IS JOKER ONE TO JOKER TWO!
JOKER 1
JAP AIRCRAFT STILL FLYING TO YOUR RIGHT. SINCE I TOOK CARE OF THE OTHER TWO, THIS ONE'S YOURS.


TARGET ACQUIRED! DISTANCE 800, 750 ....
THANKS JOKER ONE! REMIND ME TO BUY YOU A MEAL WHEN WE GET BACK!
I HAVE VISUAL! IT'S A JAP NIGHT FIGHTER, TYPE "MOONLIGHT*." LOOKS LIKE IT HASN'T SEEN ME YET, BUT IT SOON WILL!
JOKER 1

(*) THE NAKAJIMA J1N1-S GECKO, ALLIED CODE NAME "MOONLIGHT." IT WAS THE PRIMARY JAPANESE NIGHT FIGHTER OF THE WAR AND WAS NOTED FOR ITS UPWARD-FIRING MACHINE GUNS, WHICH IT USED TO DESTROY ENEMY AIRCRAFT BY FIRST DIVING UNDER THEM AND THEN OPENING FIRE.


I'M ON HIS SIX! THIS IS GOING TO BE SUCH AN EASY KILL!
DISTANCE 500 AND STILL CLOSING, AND THEY STILL HAVEN'T SEEN ME!
I'M STARTING MY ATTACK!


WELL, SO MUCH FOR OUR LITTLE AIRBASE AND RADAR STATION,
MAYBE THEY'LL END THE WAR NOW! NAAAH ....


US? DID HE SAY US? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING.
HEY! YOU THREE! THE COMMANDER WANTS TO SEE YOU PRONTO!
CORRECTION. THE BEST AT THIS AIRFIELD.
WE'RE NOBODYS. NOTHING BUT AN AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE CREW.
OH YEAH? WELL WITH NO AIRCRAFT LEFT TO SERVICE WHAT GOOD ARE WE?
OHMI-GAWD! WOMEN!!

THEY'RE THE ACTRESSES IN THAT SPECIAL TROUPE!

HEY, WE'VE SEEN THEM BEFORE.

ARE-ARE THEY REAL?!

THEY WON'T COME NEAR US GIVEN WHAT WE ARE.

OH, BUT IF I COULD DO IT WITH A GIRL THAT PRETTY JUST ONCE!

MUST'VE JUST GOT HERE AND NEED TO CLEAN UP.

JUST DON'T START CHOKING YOUR CHICKEN OUT HERE.

AT LEAST I CAN ENJOY THE VIEW AND DREAM, DREAM, DREAM ....

WE'RE COMING! I MEAN ... AS IF WE HAD A CHOICE?!

OH SHIT! CAUGHT IN THE ACT! WE'RE DEAD!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU THREE DOING?! COME WITH ME RIGHT NOW!!!!!

... FOR A JOB OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE! NOW LISTEN!!

KISIMARA! MASIMARA! MASHITA! YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN ...

THAT'S RIGHT SIR. HE'S NO MORE.

BUT SIR! I LIKE IT LIKE THIS! AND BESIDES, THE BASE BARBER WAS KILLED IN THE BOMBING!

FIRST, CUT AND TRIM THAT HAIR.

OFFICER'S UNIFORMS! FUCK!

THEN YOU CUT IT, AND AFTER THAT PUT THESE ON.

HEY LOOK! I'M A GENERAL! YOU'RE A VICE-ADMIRAL! AND HE'S A COLONEL! SORRY, SIR! I MEAN--

BUT SIR! WE'RE NOT OFFICERS! WE'RE AN AIRCRAFT--

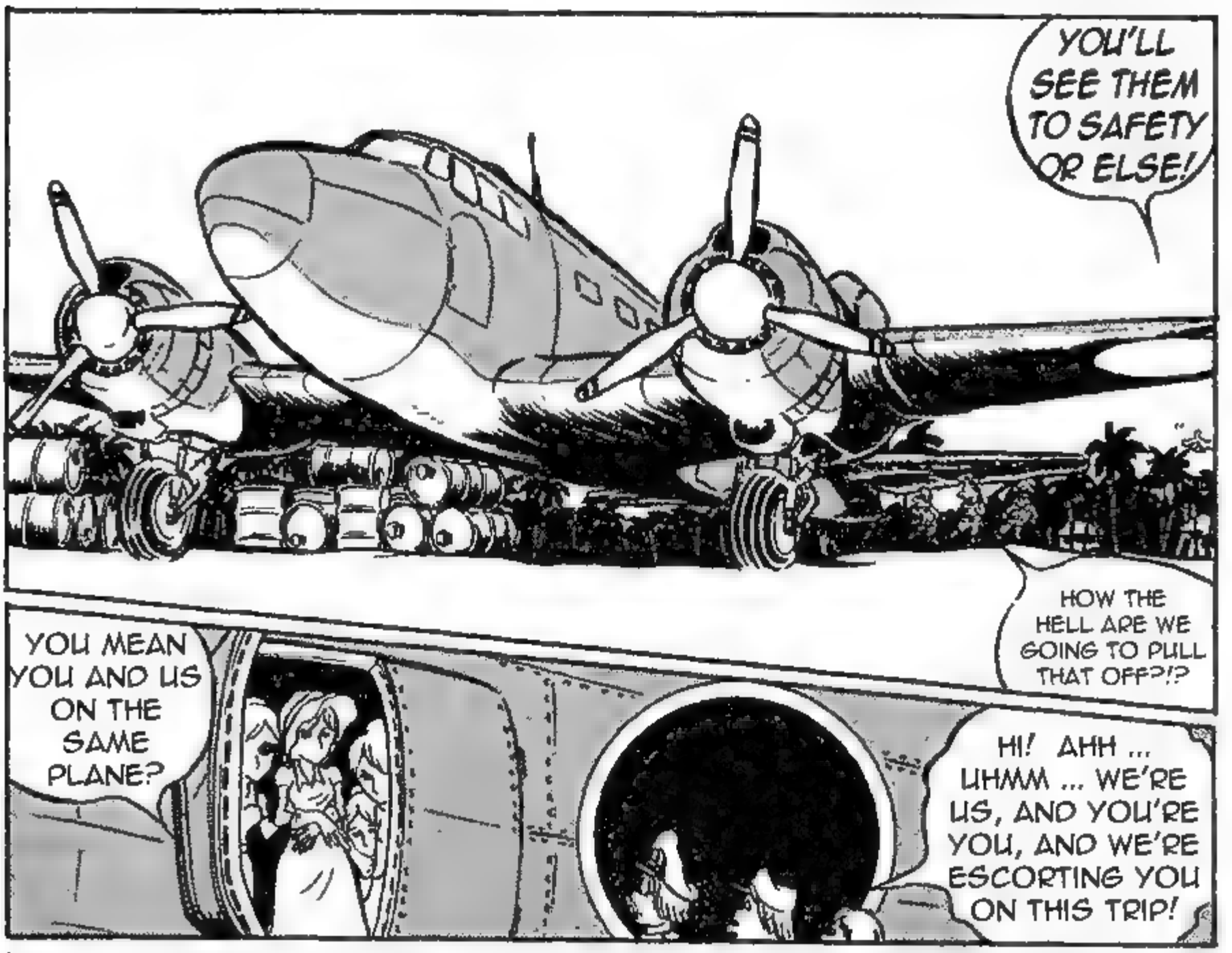
IT FLIES TOO. YOU THREE WILL BE GOING ON IT AS ESCORTS FOR OUR LOVELY GUESTS!

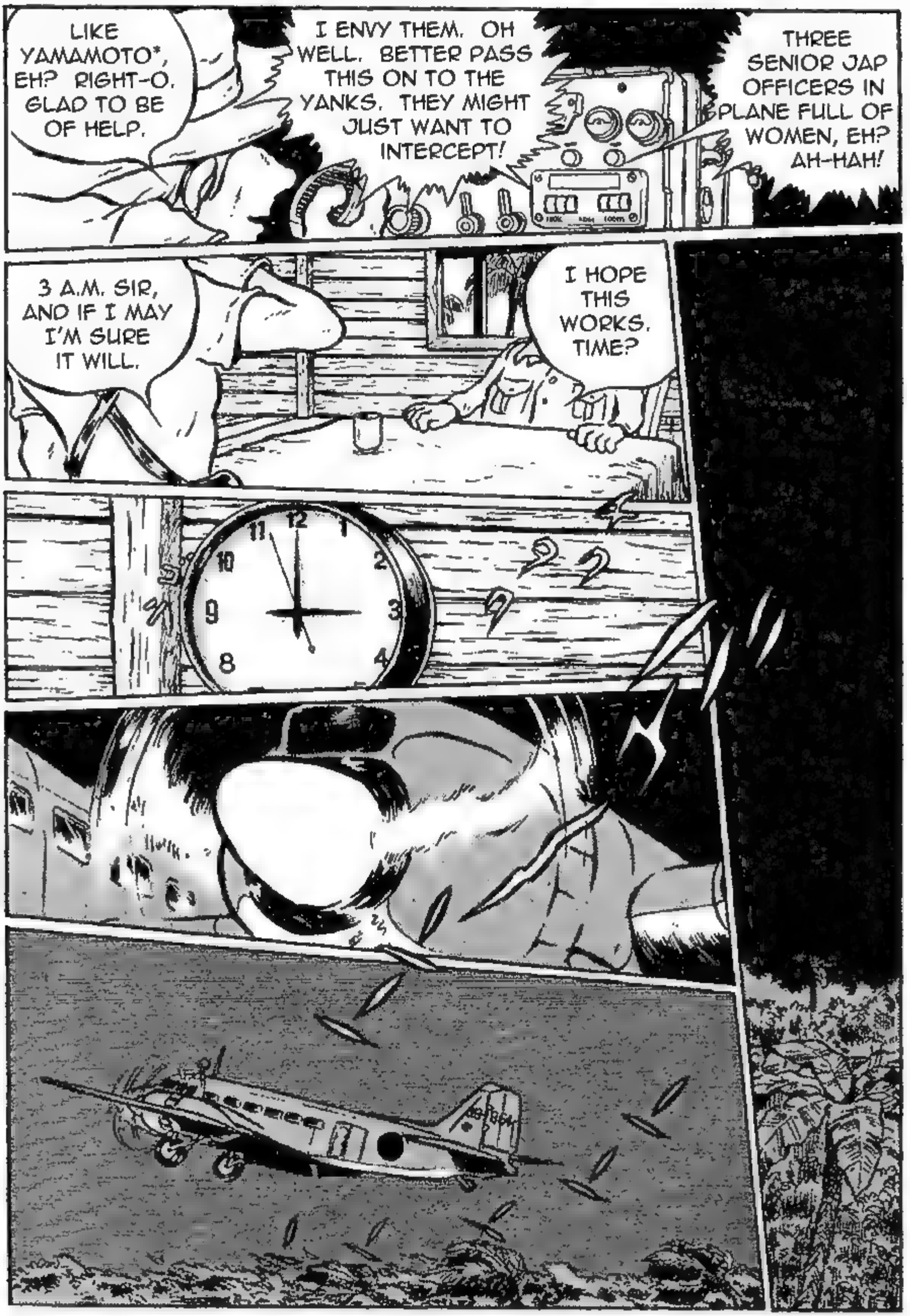
AN L2D TRANSPORT* AND IT'S IN ONE PIECE!

WELL LOOK AT THAT!

(*) THE NAKAJIMA L2D "NEW TYPE ZERO" TRANSPORT, ALLIED CODE NAME "TABBY." IT WAS ESSENTIALLY A CLOSE JAPANESE CLONE OF THE VENERABLE DOUGLAS DC-3/C-47 LICENSED BY THEM BEFORE THE WAR. LIKE ITS ALLIED COUSIN IT WOUND UP BEING ONE OF JAPAN'S BEST TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT.

SOMEWHAT LATER ....


YOU'LL SEE THEM TO SAFETY OR ELSE!
HOW THE HELL ARE WE GOING TO PULL THAT OFF?!?
YOU MEAN YOU AND US ON THE SAME PLANE?
HI! AHH ... UHMM ... WE'RE US, AND YOU'RE YOU, AND WE'RE ESCORTING YOU ON THIS TRIP!
I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.
OHHH, BOY. I SEE WE'VE ALREADY LOST HIM! AT THE RATE WE'RE GOING, WE'LL PROBABLY LOSE THE WAR TOO!
AHH ... YES MA'AM. THAT'S HOW IT'S DONE.
THREE SENIOR OFFICERS AND A PLANE FULL OF ... !! HEY! ... THAT ONE KINDA LOOKS LIKE SUSAN HAYWARD! MMMMHH!!!


LIKE YAMAMOTO*, EH? RIGHT-O. GLAD TO BE OF HELP.
I ENVY THEM. OH WELL. BETTER PASS THIS ON TO THE YANKS. THEY MIGHT JUST WANT TO INTERCEPT!
THREE SENIOR JAP OFFICERS IN PLANE FULL OF WOMEN, EH? AH-HAH!
3 A.M. SIR, AND IF I MAY I'M SURE IT WILL.
I HOPE THIS WORKS. TIME?

99 (*) ADMIRAL ISOKORU YAMAMOTO, THE SENIORMOST JAPANESE NAVAL FLAG OFFICER AND THEIR GREATEST STRATEGIST, WAS KILLED WHEN HIS PERSONAL AIRCRAFT WAS SHOT DOWN BY AMERICAN FIGHTERS ON 18 APRIL 1943.

THE YANKS ARE SENDING THE JOKERS AFTER IT.

YES SIR. IT WAS EITHER A C-47 REPAINTED IN JAP COLORS OR A COPY OF ONE, I'M SURE OF IT.

I GUESS I CAN'T COMPLAIN. IT'S FLYING, AFTER ALL.

THIS PLANE IS MADE FROM TWO DIFFERENT PLANES!

I THINK WE'VE FOUND OUT WHY.

THIS THING CREAKS A LOT.

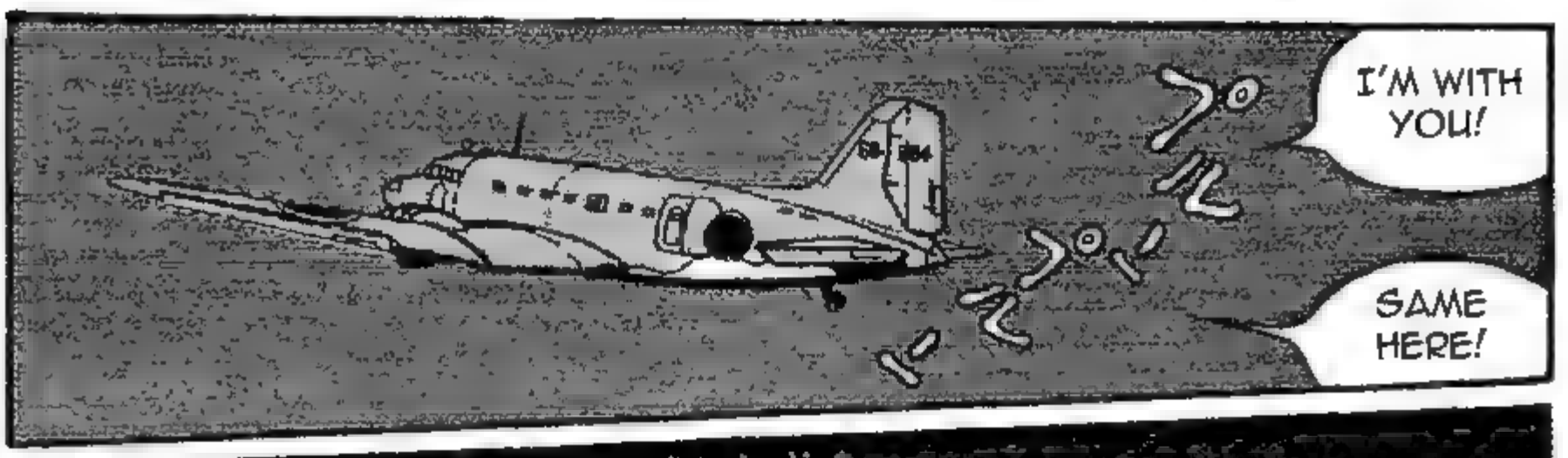
KEEP YOUR FILTHY PAWS OFF OF OUR SILKY DRAWERS!

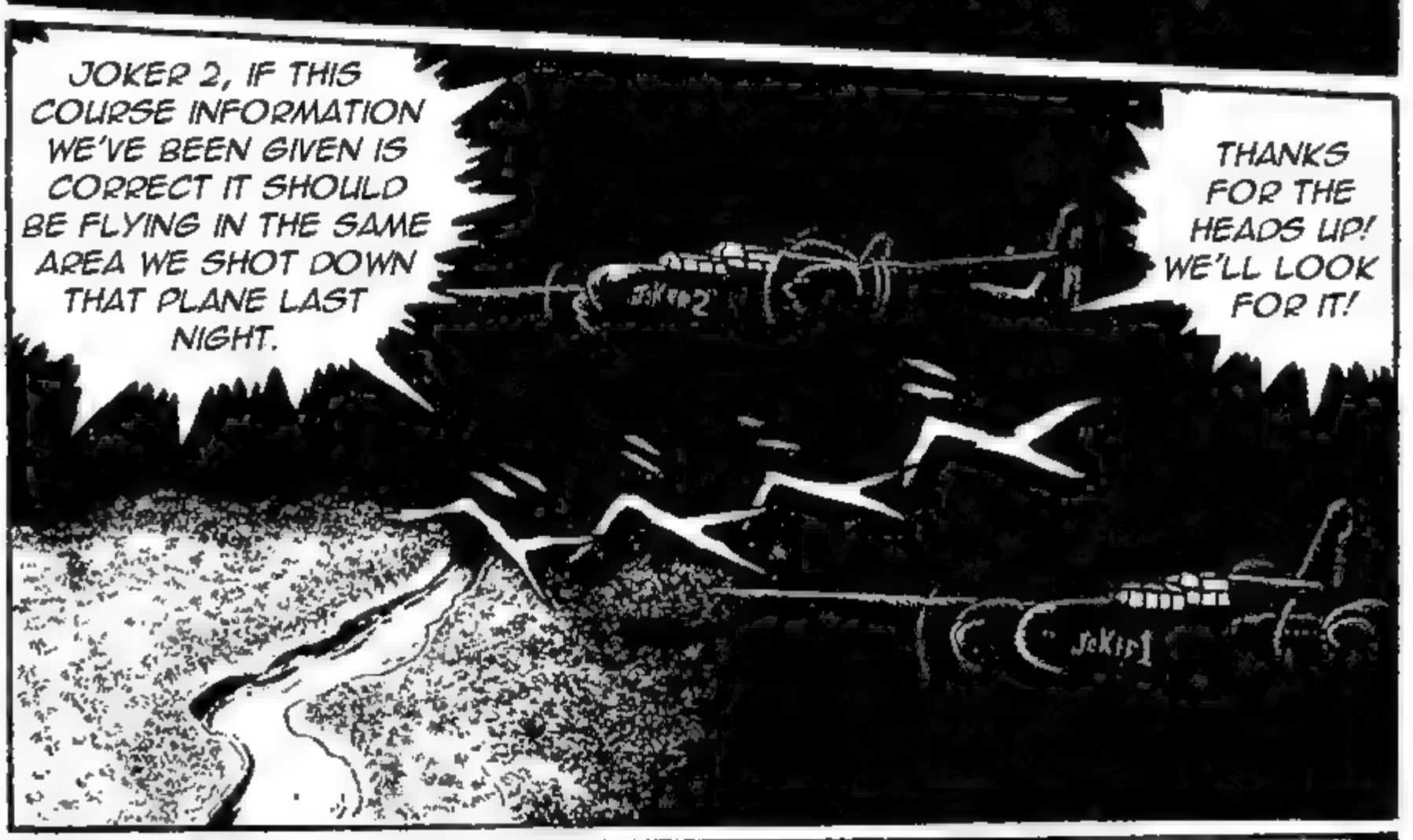
LADIES! WE'LL—

I KNOW ONE THING. IF WE GET SHOT DOWN ON THE WAY TO WHEREEVER WE'RE GOING I FULLY INTEND TO FALL INTO THE PRETTIEST ONE BEFORE I DIE!

THIS SUCKS! WE'RE ON A PLANE FULL OF WOMEN THAT COULD FALL APART AT ANY MINUTE AND WE CAN'T GET NEAR THEM!

WELL, SO MUCH FOR PROTECTING THEM. I'D GUESS THEY'D RATHER PROTECT THEMSELVES.


I'M WITH YOU!
SAME HERE!


JOKER 2, IF THIS COURSE INFORMATION WE'VE BEEN GIVEN IS CORRECT IT SHOULD BE FLYING IN THE SAME AREA WE SHOT DOWN THAT PLANE LAST NIGHT.
THANKS FOR THE HEADS UP! WE'LL LOOK FOR IT!
JOKER 2
JOKER 1

SIR! LONG RANGE RADAR CONTACT!
HMM! MIGHT BE PART OF THEIR COMMAND STAFF FOR THIS AREA! PITY ABOUT THE GIRLS, BUT WAR IS WAR. LET'S DO IT!
FURTHERMORE, IT'S CARRYING A TROUP OF JAPANESE ACTRESSES AS WELL AS THREE HIGH-RANKING FLAG OFFICERS!

BR-ADD-A-ADA-ADA-AD-A-ADA-

THE BLOND IS MINE, I TELL YOU!!

THE WOMEN!

HEY!! WHAT ARE YOU-- AAAHHH!!!

GET YOUR FINGERS OUT OF THERE!!

OW! YOU LECH!

OH MY! OH MY! OH ... !

WE'RE TURNING AROUND AND HEADING BACK!

MAYDAY! MAYDAY! WE ARE UNDER ATTACK!

AGREED. DAMN. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO CAPTURE THE LOT.

I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO LET US FORCE HIM DOWN.

THAT'S A GOOD PILOT FLYING THAT TRANSPORT DESPITE ALL THE DAMAGE WE'VE GIVEN HIM SO FAR!

NOW IT'S MY TURN!

THIS IS JOKER 1! I'M WITHIN GUN RANGE!

BY THE GODS! THEY'RE PUTTING SHELLS THROUGH EVERY PANEL ON THIS PLANE!

DAMN! THEY'RE STILL NOT GOING DOWN! JOKER 2, YOU GET ANOTHER ROUND!

HOLY FUCKIN' SHEE-EEE-IIIT!!!

OKAY!

WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE IN-FLIGHT TURBULENCE!

THANK YOU FOR FLYING JAPAN AIR, LADIES!

IT'S THE SUN!

YES!

SHIT! IT'S DAYLIGHT! AND WE GOT COMPANY!

ZEROS!

THIS IS JOKER FLIGHT! WE'RE BEING AMBUSHED BY A FLIGHT OF ZEROS! THE TRANSPORT HAS ESCAPED!! HELP US!!!

OH!

CRASH!!!!!

I'VE BEEN THINKIN'. I THINK THE COLONEL SET US AND THESE GIRLS UP AS BAIT TO GET THOSE BLACK WIDOWS.

IT WAS A PRETTY SNEAKY PLAN, ACTUALLY.

HELP!!

AT LEAST IT DIDN'T BREAK UP IN FLIGHT!

I WONDER WHY THE COLONEL HAD THEM ON THAT PLANE?

TO MAKE SURE WE GOT ON AND STAYED ON!

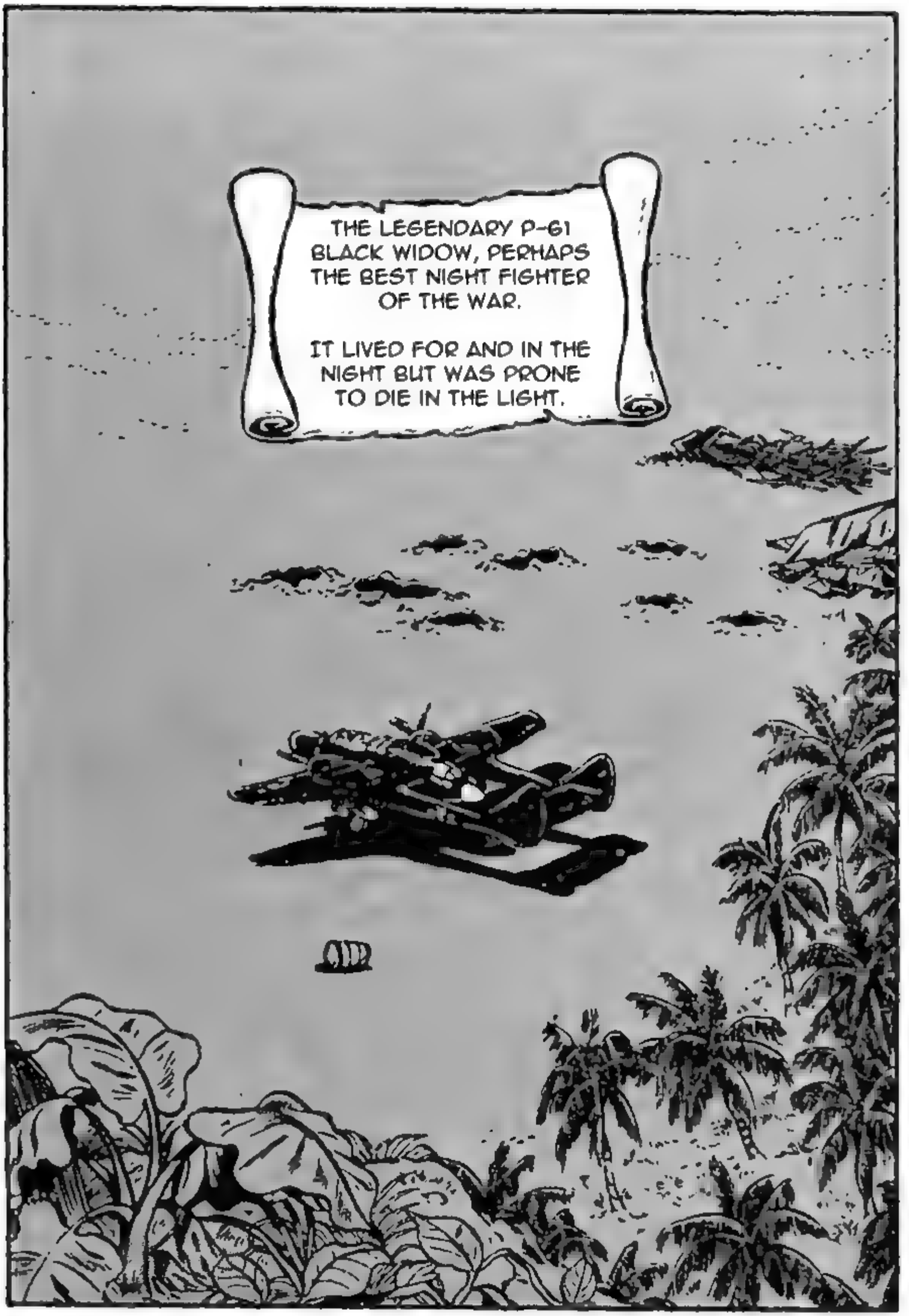
ALL I GOT WAS A RIGHT HOOK.

I GOT SIX! NONE THE SAME!

I GOT TWO!

HRMPH!

AND NOW WE'RE BACK TO BEING THE BASE LOW-LIFES THAT WE WERE.


THE LEGENDARY P-61 BLACK WIDOW, PERHAPS THE BEST NIGHT FIGHTER OF THE WAR.
IT LIVED FOR AND IN THE NIGHT BUT WAS PRONE TO DIE IN THE LIGHT.

<Published in Big Comic Original, July 20, 1975 issue>

ENDE

THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

I FIRST HEARD THIS TALE WHEN I WAS ON A FLIGHT FROM BOMBAY IN INDIA TOWARDS NAIROBI IN KENYA.

THE PERSON TELLING IT TO ME SWORE IT WAS A TRUE STORY. WHETHER IT IS OR NOT I WILL LET YOU JUDGE. BELIEVING AS YOU ARE WILLING TO LISTEN.

... THE BLOOD OF THE WRONGFULLY SLAIN, BOTH THEN AND NOW, AND OF A DECADES LONG DESIRE FOR REVENGE ....

IT IS A TALE SEEPED IN BLOOD ...

AS FOR ME, I SWEAR THAT I WILL TELL ONLY WHAT I HEARD AND NO MORE OR LESS.

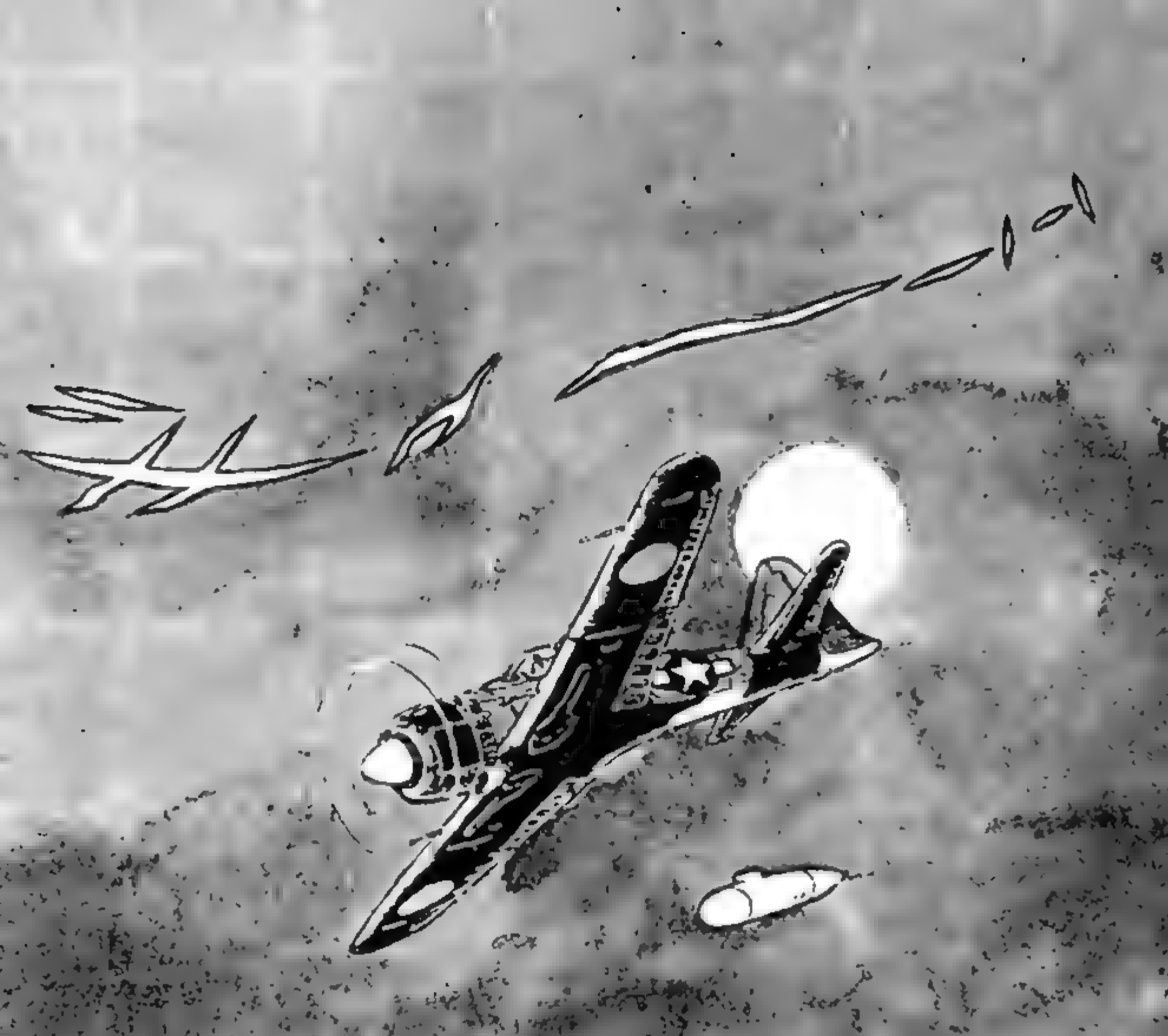
WHILE THIS TALE ENDS IN AFRICA IN THE HERE AND NOW, IT BEGINS IN JAPAN JUST AFTER THE END OF THE WAR.

THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

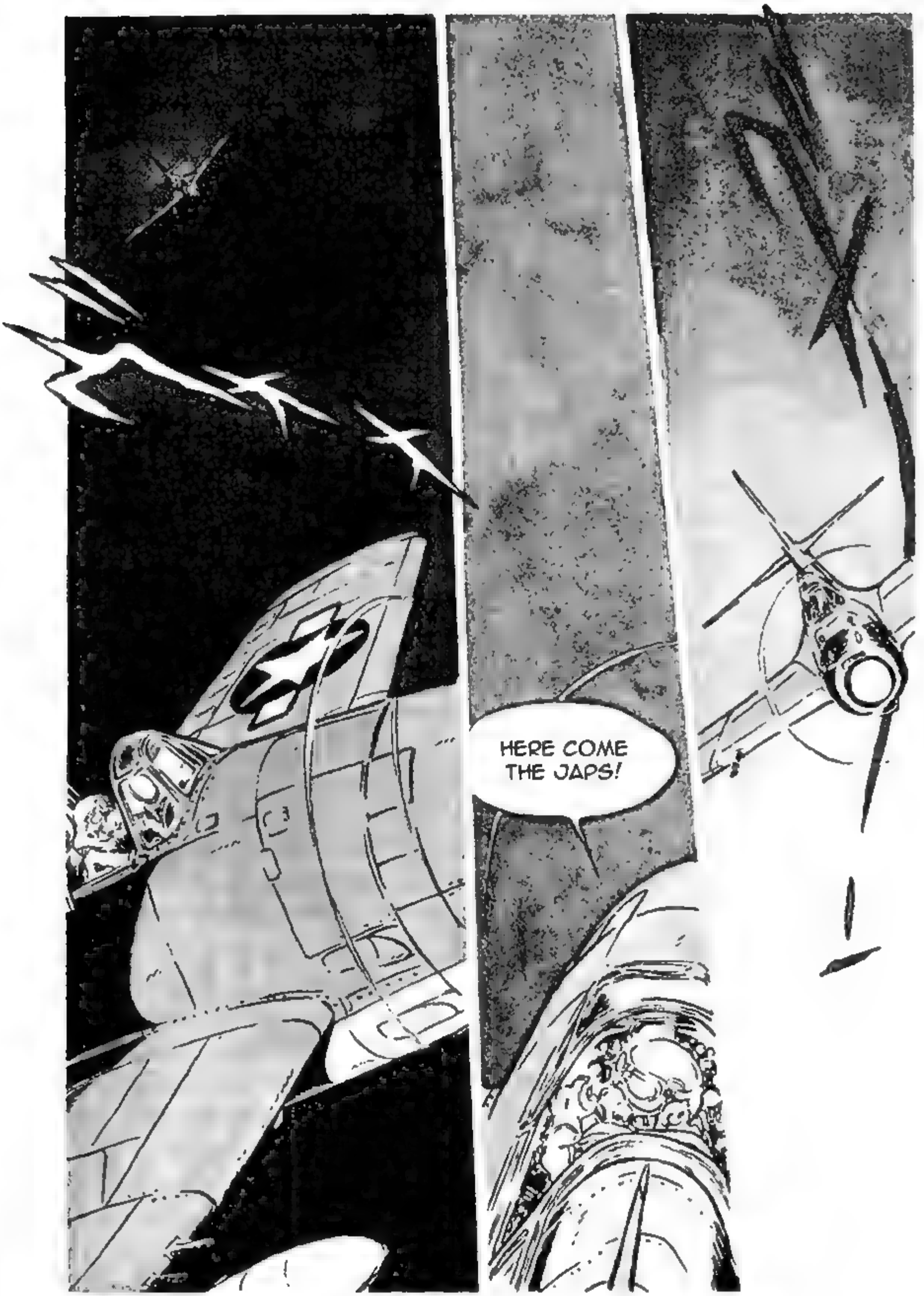
OUR TALE BEGINS IN JAPAN, LATE 1945 AFTER WAR'S END AND AFTER THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION OF JAPAN HAS BEGUN ...

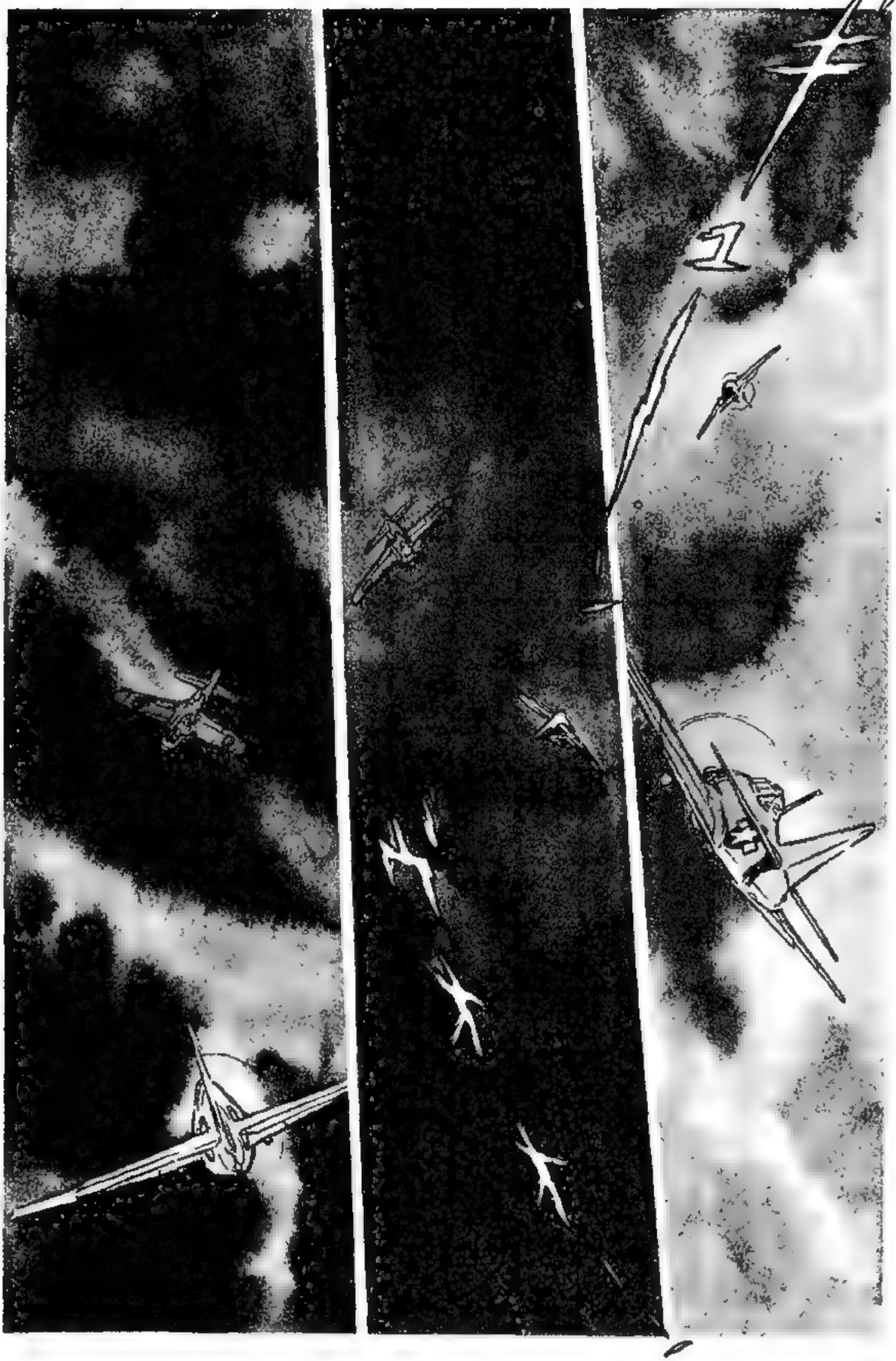
OKAY, RYKARO, YOU'RE ISOLATED. EVERYTHING'S SET!

ROGER MEYERS! I'M READY WHEN YOU ARE! COME FIND ME!



THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED





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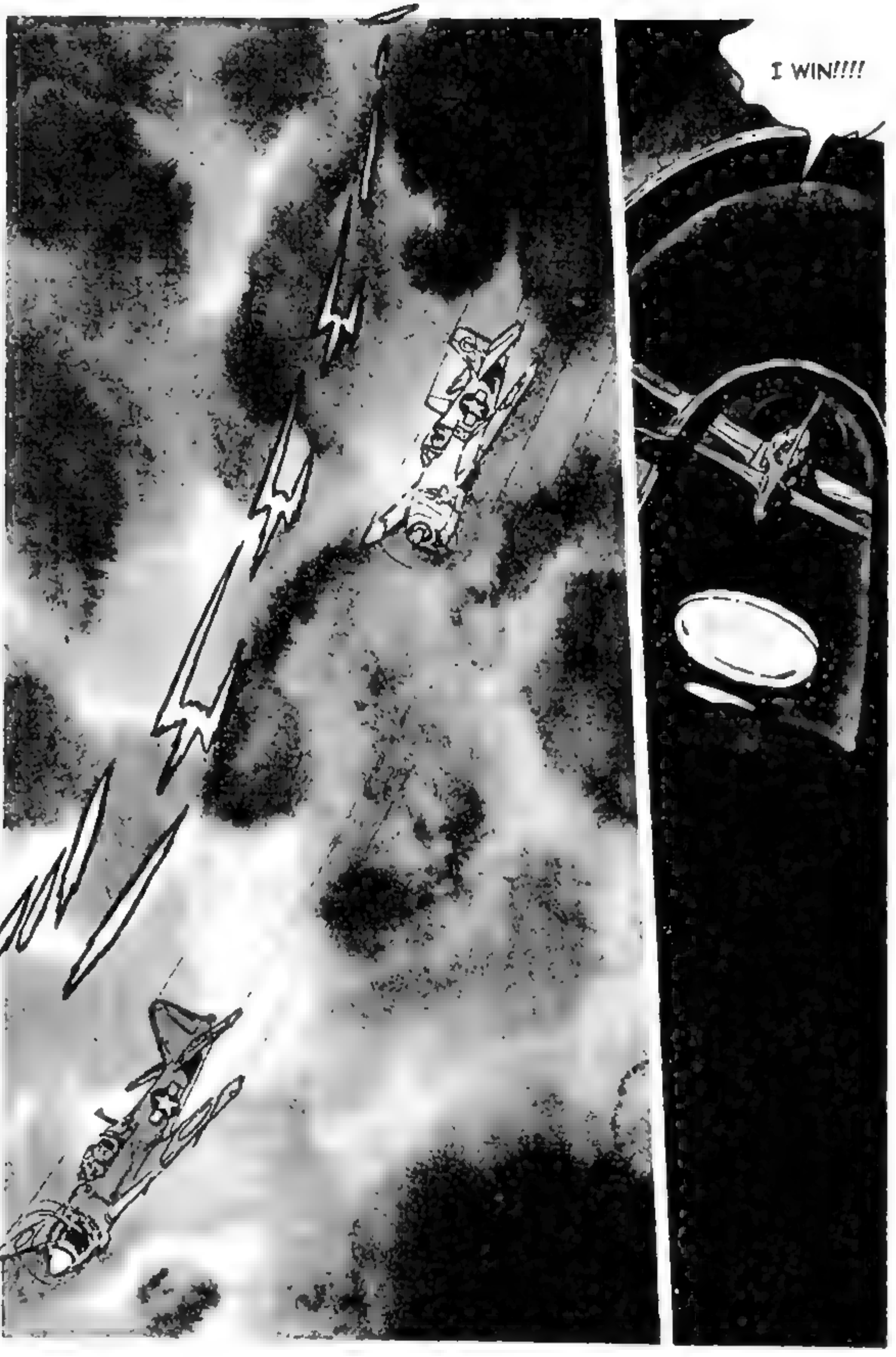


AHH!!!

DON'T SHOOT! IT'S ME, MEYERS!!

OKAY!

THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

I SWEAR, YOU STILL GET TOO MUCH INTO IT, RYKARD.

WHEW! THANKS FOR SPEAKING UP IN ENGLISH WHEN YOU DID! OLD HABITS DIE HARD! SORRY ABOUT THAT!

... AND MY HANDS ARE SOAKED IN THE BLOOD OF LOTS OF JAP PILOTS.

I CAN'T HELP IT. IT'S NOT BEEN THAT LONG SINCE THE FIGHTING STOPPED, YOU KNOW ...

SO NOW THAT YOU'VE GOTTEN TO SEE THEM UP CLOSE AND EVEN FLY THEM, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF JAP PLANES?

IT JUST GOT TO BE A THING, YOU KNOW. LAUNCH, SHOOT DOWN JAPS, COME BACK.

I CAN BEAT THEM ALL BUT THAT JET,* AND I'M WILLING TO LAY EVEN MONEY ON BEATING IT TOO.

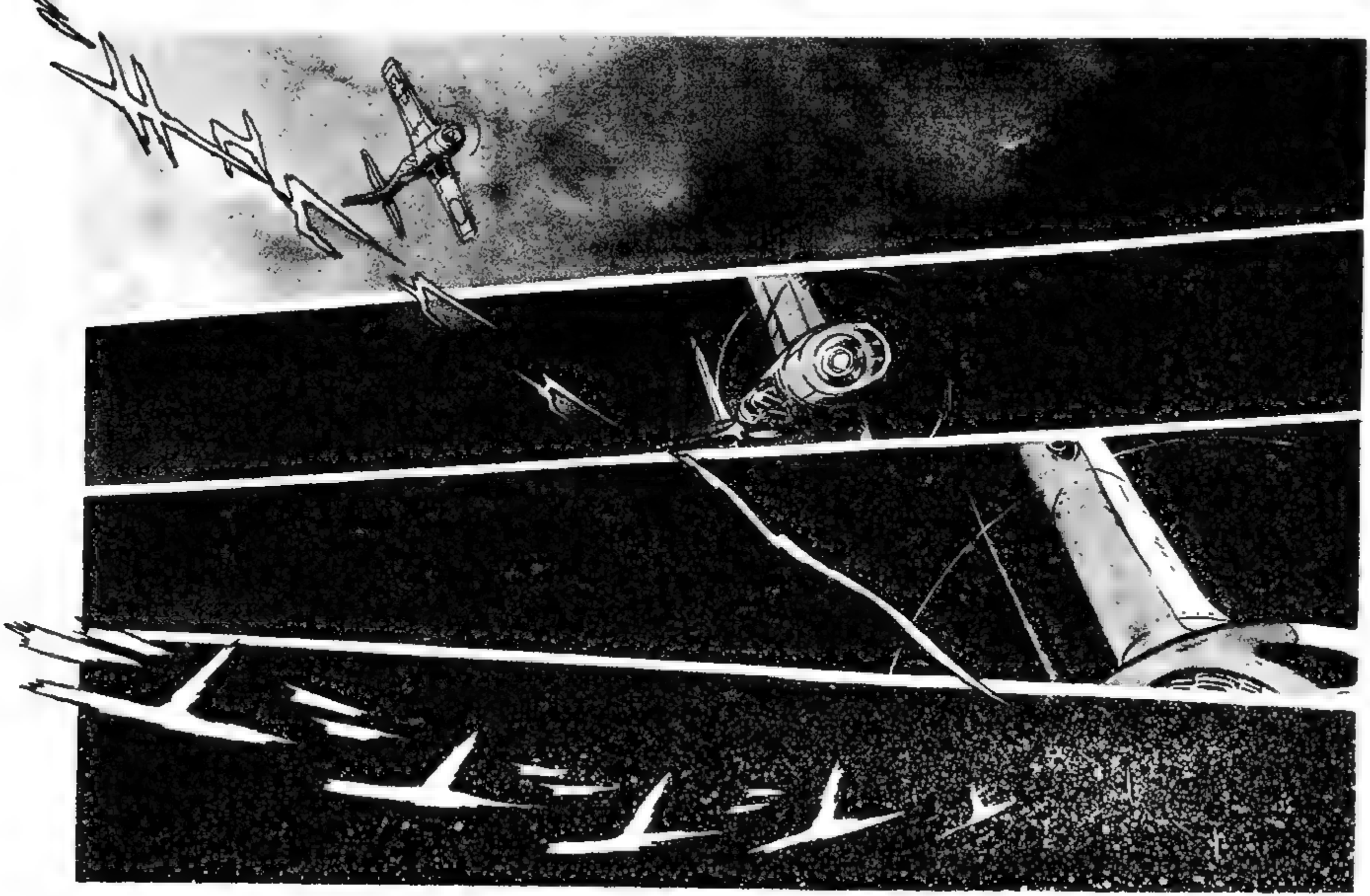
ME? I'LL STILL BET ON MY F6F HELLCAT EVERY TIME. I'VE HAD MY TURN AT EVERY TYPE OF PLANE THE JAPS HAD.

THE ONLY WAY IT MIGHT BEAT ME WAS IF THE JAPS STILL HAD ANY GOOD--

HEY! LONE PLANE AT 8 O'CLOCK!

(*) "... ALL BUT THAT JET" - THE NAKAJIMA KIKKA, JAPAN'S NEAR-CLONE OF THE GERMAN MESSERSCHMITT ME-262 SCHWALBE.

IT'S JUST ANOTHER HELLCAT. DON'T WORRY.



SON OF A--!!

A SUICIDE RAID, MAYBE? DAMN SNEAKY, USING ONE OF OUR OWN PLANES!

THAT HELLCAT HAD JAPANESE INSIGNIA!

IF I EVER CATCH THAT SUNUVABITCH I'M GONNA KILL HIM!

ONLY FOR SOME ....

GOOD LUCK TRYING TO FIND HIM, RYKARD. DON'T FORGET, THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A CEASEFIRE. THE WAR IS OVER.

OF COURSE NOT. THE WAR'S OVER, ISN'T IT?

THERE AREN'T ANY JAP PILOTS STILL FLYING, ARE THERE?

NOW THAT WE'VE PICKED OUT THE ONES WE WANT FOR TRANSPORT, WE'LL HEAD TO THE BENGOKU REGION NEXT.

AH, A KIKKA! MADE BY A TEST UNIT PROBABLY SIMILAR TO MY OWN!

HE'S HIDING. BUT WHERE--

A JAP IN A FLIGHT SUIT! COULD HE BE THE ONE? I'D BETTER CHECK THIS OUT, JUST IN CASE.

OH, HIM! HE'S ONE OF THE FEW VETERAN JAPANESE PILOTS LEFT. HE'S BEEN HELPING US WITH THE PLANES.

WHO IS HE AND WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?

OYAMADA, EH? WHAT WERE YOU? ARMY PILOT OR NAVY? WHAT WAS YOUR RANK, AND HOW LONG DID YOU SERVE?

OYA-MADA.

YOU THERE! WHAT'S YOUR NAME.

I SEE.

I DIDN'T FIGHT IN THIS WAR, YANK. I WAS IN THE ONE BEFORE THAT. I WAS A TRAINER IN THIS WAR, NOT A FIGHTER.

I'VE SEEN THE PLANE.

I'M LOOKING FOR A JAP PILOT WHO WAS FLYING A HELLCAT WITH JAP MARKINGS. HAVE YOU SEE HIM?

?!?

THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

WHAT?
IS THERE ANOTHER ONE STILL FLYABLE? ONE WITH THE CLIFF SIGIL ON ITS TAIL?
MY WAR GAMES TEAM WAS ATTACKED YESTERDAY BY AN F6F WITH JAP MARKINGS.
THIS IS THE ONLY F6F HERE WITH OUR MARKINGS. WE RECOVERED IT DURING THE WAR, FIXED IT UP, STUDIED IT. THAT'S ALL.
--OOZING IN EXCESS IT DOESN'T NEED. TOO MUCH ENGINE, ARMOR. IT WALLOWS LIKE A PIG.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THE F6F IS--
HRMPH. POOR CHOICE OF PLANE FOR WHOEVER IT WAS.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN WITH THE RIGHT PILOTS, BUT YOUR PEOPLE KILLED THEM BEFORE THAT HAPPENED.
ARE YOU SAYING THE ZERO IS BETTER THAN THE F6F?

I DARESAY I COULD EVEN BEAT YOU IN ONE, MISTER HIGH AND MIGHTY AMERICAN ACE.

IF I WERE EVER TO FLY IN COMBAT AGAIN, THE ZERO WOULD BE MY PLANE OF CHOICE.

I'VE GIVE US 60-40 ODDS IN MY FAVOR, YOU IN YOUR FLYING TANK AND ME IN THE ZERO, MY EXPERIENCE AGAINST YOUR ARROGANCE.

YOU REALLY THINK SO?

I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU EAT THOSE WORDS, OLD MAN!

EVERY PLANE HAS ITS PROS AND CONS, BUT YOU AND YOUR ATTITUDE AS A PILOT IS A VERY BIG CON.

I'M HERE TO HELP WITH THE PLANES. I'M NOT HERE TO FLY THEM.

THIS ORIGINAL ZERO NEEDS TO GO TO ATSUGI. YOU'LL FLY IT. I'LL ESCORT.

SOME CHOICE. THEN AGAIN, I'D RATHER FLY THAT THAN THIS REPAINTED ONE.

GET IN, OR I'LL HAVE TWO M.P.S TIE YOU TO MY TAIL AND I'LL DRAG YOU THERE!

THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

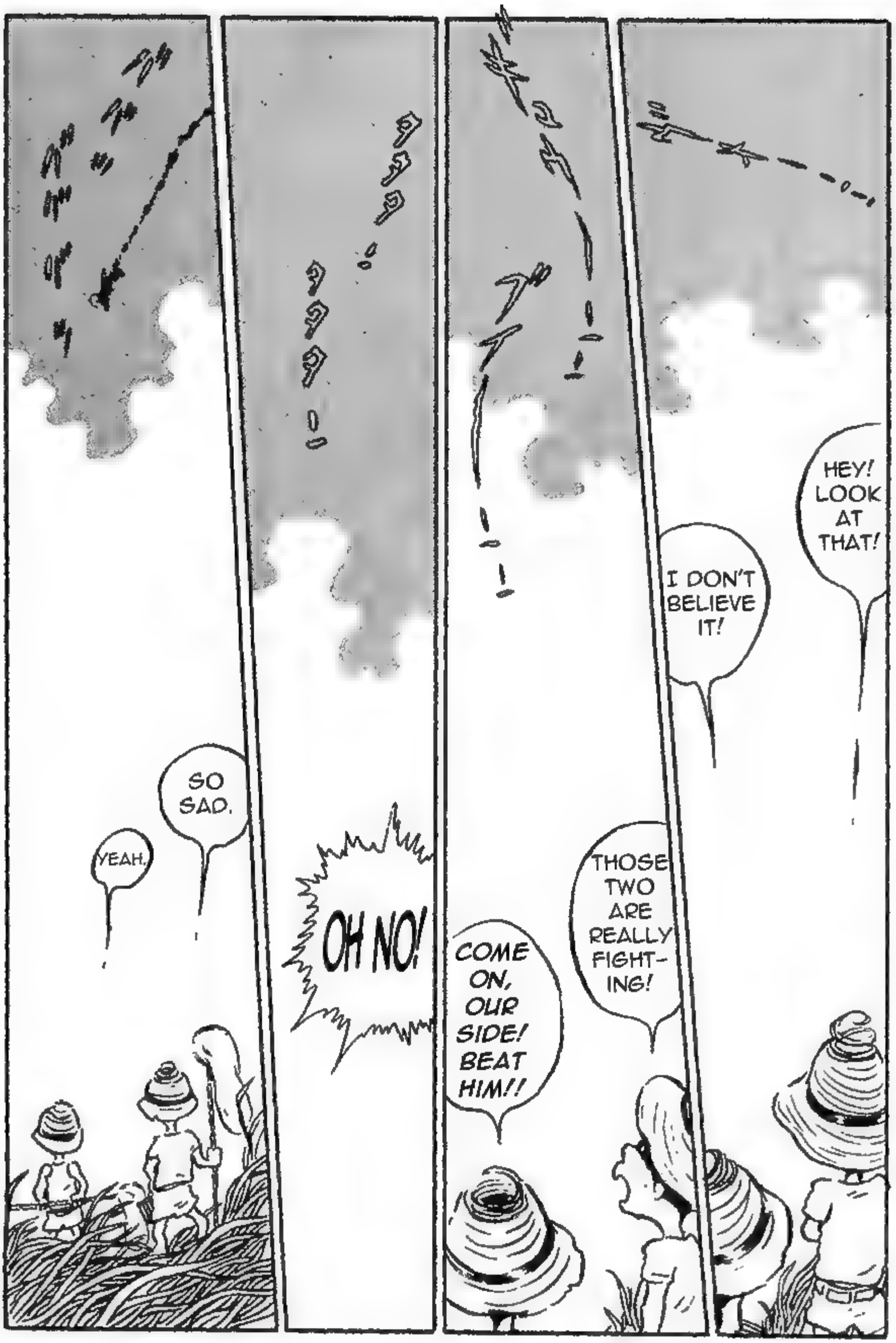
... ...
OR IS IT THAT JAPANESE PRIDE AT WORK?
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? THEY'RE STILL THE SAME PLANES. THE MARKINGS DON'T MATTER.
NO. I'M JUST PREPARED TO DIE. ARE YOU?
GIVING UP SO SOON?
I CAN SEE WHAT'S COMING, AND ITS A GOOD THING I'VE ALREADY LIVED A FULL LIFE.
UNDERSTAND, THIS IS NOT BY MY CHOICE, AMERICAN.
LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH ... IF YOU DARE.
GET IN YOUR PLANE.
OH MY. DID I STRIKE A NERVE, AMERICAN?
YOU INSOLENT SON OF ....

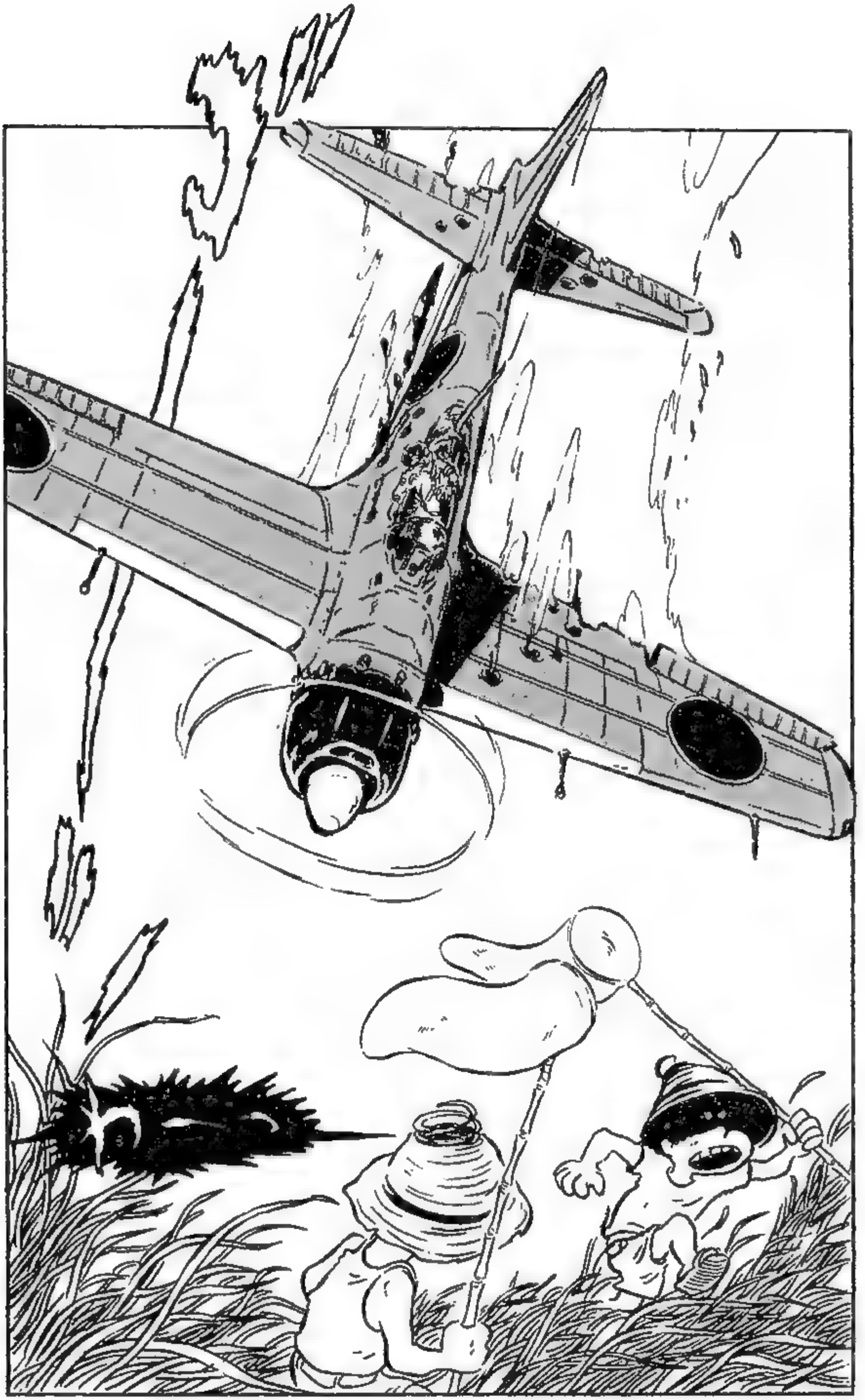
RYKARD DELIBERATELY PICKED A FIGHT WITH THAT OLD JAP PILOT. I WONDER WHY?

DOESN'T MATTER. RYKARD'S GONNA WAX HIS ASS ANYWAY.

ONLY TWO TODAY? MAYBE IT'LL STAY QUIET.

I WISH THEY'D ALL GO AWAY. I'M SICK OF SEEING AMERICAN PLANES.


SO SAD.
YEAH.
OH NO!
COME ON, OUR SIDE! BEAT HIM!!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
HEY! LOOK AT THAT!
THOSE TWO ARE REALLY FIGHT-ING!



THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

LET US NOW SKIP AHEAD IN TIME TO THE MID-1970S, WHERE OUR TALE RESUMES AGAIN ....

WELL, TRUE OR NOT THAT STORY HELPED PASS THE TIME.

... BUT THAT'S WHAT I WAS TOLD.

I REMEMBER COMING UP WITH IT AFTER SEEING A SKY LIKE THIS. IT WAS ALSO ON AN AIRPLANE. DIFFERENT FLIGHT IN A DIFFERENT PLACE, BUT YOU KNOW.

I'VE GOT A STORY FOR YOU FOR THE TRIP BACK, IF YOU'LL HEAR IT. IT'S ABOUT MY FATHER, MAJOR OYAMADA, AND HOW HE DIED UNJUSTLY AT THE END OF THE WAR.

IT WAS ECONOMY CLASS. NOTHING LIKE THIS! WE WERE PACKED IN THAT PLANE LIKE SARDINES! NO IN-FLIGHT LUNCH EITHER!

OF COURSE THERE'S MR. FUJITA, THE VETERAN BIG GAME HUNTER WHO'S IN CHARGE OF THE WHOLE THING ...

BUT THAT'S LATER. I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW BIG WAS THIS SPECIAL CHARTER.

... HIS, UHMM, "FRIEND" AND VERY CLOSE COMPANION MASAKO OGAWA ...

... THERE'S HIS CHAIN-SMOKING DAUGHTER YASUKO ...

... AND TWO MORE ARMY VETERANS, MR. KOBAYASHI AND MR. ISHII ...

... MR. TOMOZURU, FORMER ARMY VETERAN AND SURVIVOR OF THE IMPHAL CAMPAIGN ...

SLURP AND YOU, OYAMADA, *GOBBLE* AND ME, YOUR GOOD BUDDY AKIRA! *BURP*

... AND THERE'S MR. YOSHIDA, A DESIGN ENGINEER FOR A MAJOR CONSTRUCTION COMPANY--

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST MR. RYKARD, THE AMERICAN EXECUTIVE FOR WHOM I WORK, WHO BOTH SET UP THIS CHARTER AND PAID FOR IT.

I NEVER DREAMED I'D GET TO GO ON A REAL AFRICAN SAFARI! I WAS SO GLAD THAT OYAMADA CLEARED IT WITH MR. RYKARD SO I COULD GO TOO!

KENYA

Nairobi

LATER, AFTER LANDING AND CHECKING IN AT THE HOTEL MILIMANI IN NAIROBI ....

WELCOME TO KENYA, EVERYONE! I'M KUGI FROM MIKATO SAFARI AND I'LL BE YOUR COORDINATOR DURING YOUR STAY!

Hotel Milimani

WE HOPE YOU FIND OUR ACCOMMODATIONS TO YOUR LIKING AND WE HOPE EVEN MORE THAT YOU ENJOY THE SAFARI ITSELF!

NO NEED TO BE NERVOUS, MR. MANGA ARTIST! AND I'M SURE YOU WILL FIND PLENTY ON SAFARI TO INSPIRE YOU IN YOUR WORK!

H- HE- HEL- HELLO!

UHH ... AHH ... THAT'S ME.

A LITTLE BUSH BIRD HAS TOLD ME THAT AMONG YOU IS AN UNUSUAL MEMBER, A MANGA ARTIST. WILL YOU STEP UP?

I ... AH ... I LIKE YOUR WILDLIFE! I LIKE NATURE! UHH ... I FIND IT ALL SO BEAUTIFUL! I WILL HAVE PLENTY OF INSPIRATION FOR WHEN I GO BACK!

... HOO BOY ...

CONFIDENTIALLY, I AM GLAD THAT AT LEAST ONE OF YOU IS HERE ONLY TO SHOOT PICTURES AND NOT THE WILDLIFE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. DO YOU, MR. MANGA ARTIST?

UH, YEAH! YEAH!

THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD HUNT THE ANIMALS TO EXTINCTION, BUT YOU CAPTURE THEIR BEAUTY!

THANK YOU, MR. MANGA ARTIST!

I WILL! I WILL! I WILL!

PLEASE DRAW WELL, SO THE BEAUTY OF THE ANIMALS CAN BE SAVED!

WILL YOU DO THAT FOR ME? PLEASE?!

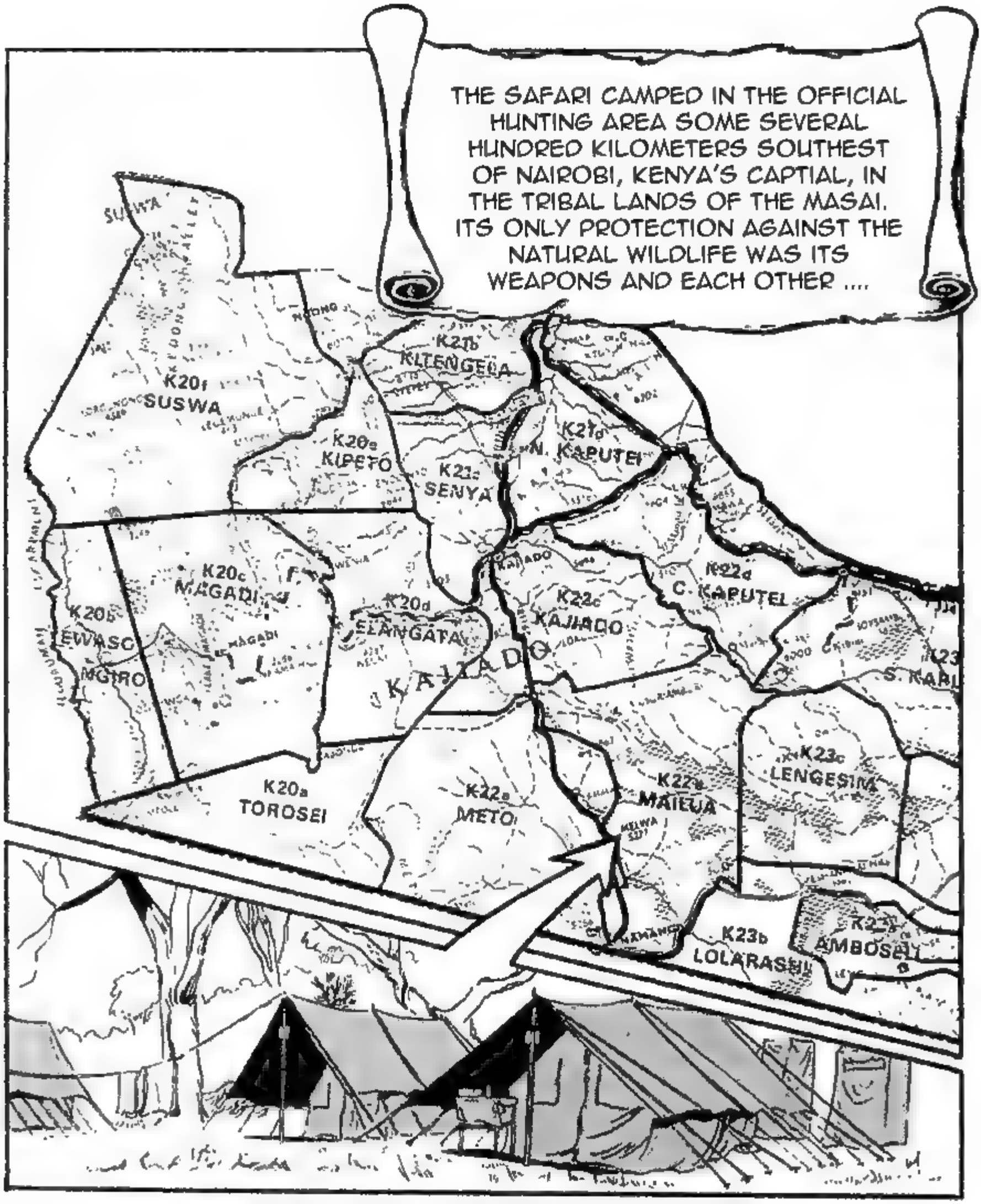
I JUST WISH I COULD TELL HIM THAT I'LL ALSO BE HUNTING TOO!

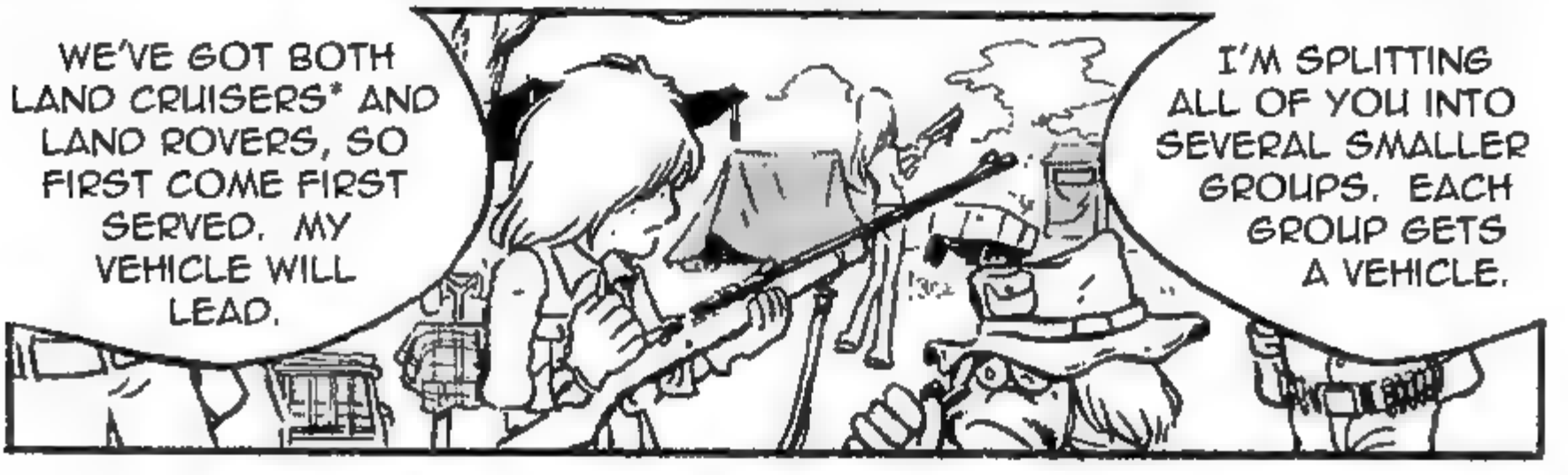
YOU MADE HIM HAPPY. ROLL WITH IT, AKIRA.

BY THE GODS, THAT GUY IS A NUT!

THE FOLLOWING DAY AND AFTER EVERYTHING WAS MADE READY, THE CHARTER WENT TO THE HUNTING AREA AT THE FOOT OF MT. MERWA TO BEGIN THEIR SAFARI ...

THE SAFARI CAMPED IN THE OFFICIAL HUNTING AREA SOME SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOMETERS SOUTHEST OF NAIROBI, KENYA'S CAPTIAL, IN THE TRIBAL LANDS OF THE MASAI. ITS ONLY PROTECTION AGAINST THE NATURAL WILDLIFE WAS ITS WEAPONS AND EACH OTHER ....

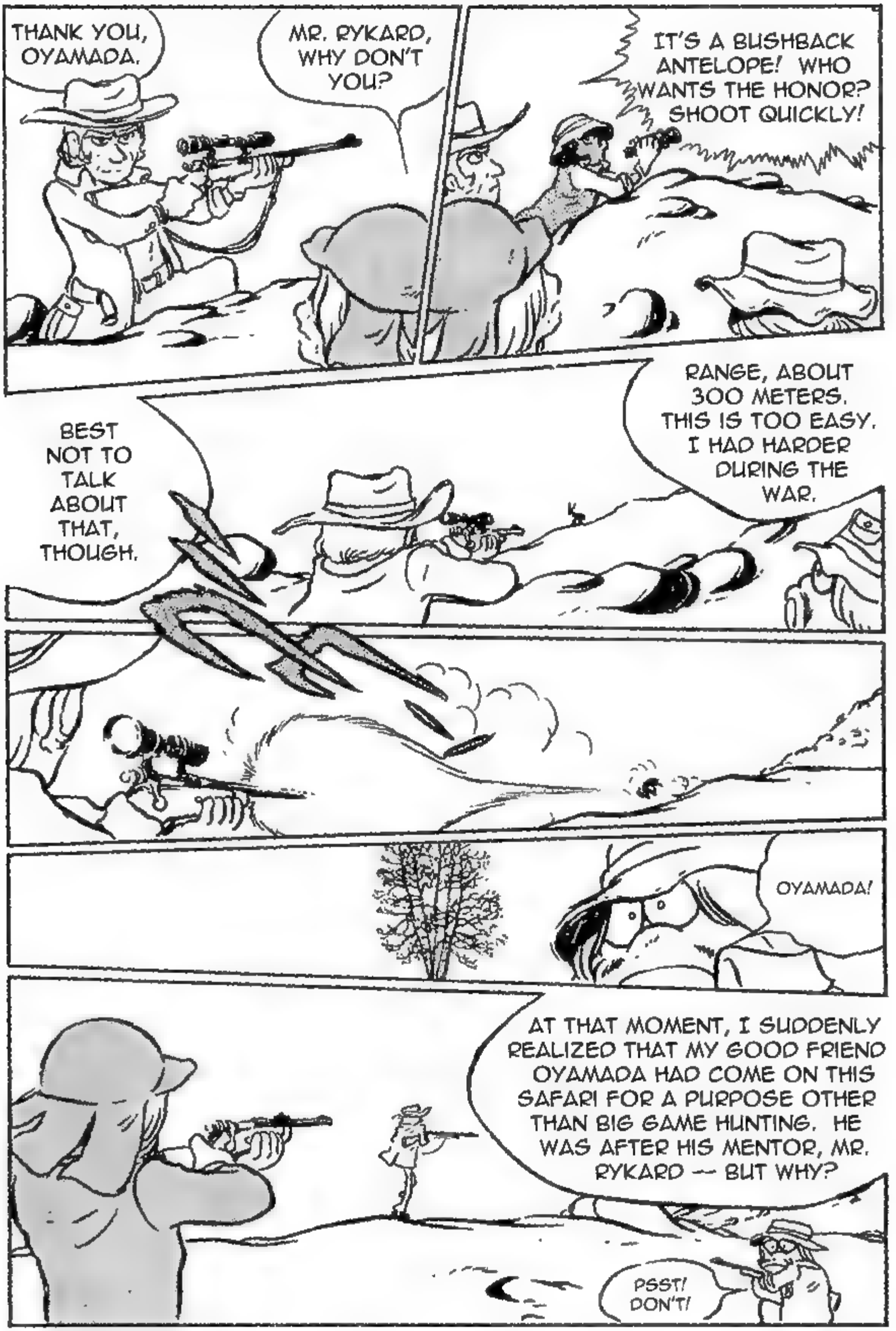



WE'VE GOT BOTH LAND CRUISERS* AND LAND ROVERS, SO FIRST COME FIRST SERVED. MY VEHICLE WILL LEAD.
I'M SPLITTING ALL OF YOU INTO SEVERAL SMALLER GROUPS. EACH GROUP GETS A VEHICLE.

(*) THE TOYOTA LAND CRUISER, WIDELY CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST 4X4 OFF-ROAD VEHICLE PRODUCT LINES OVER THE YEARS. IT'S GOT QUITE THE HISTORY, SO LOOK IT UP!

OUR GUIDE LOOKED LIKE HE HAD A NATIVE FOR A FATHER BUT A WHITE WOMAN FOR A MOTHER.
ODDLY ENOUGH, MR. RYKARD ASKED TO GO WITH ME AND OYAMADA. I DIDN'T ARGUE.
HE ALSO SAID HIS NAME WAS "OMAR SHARIF," LIKE THE ACTOR. I HAVE TO ADMIT THERE WAS SOMETHING OF A LIKENESS. HE EVEN TALKED LIKE HIM.
QUIET! WE HUNT BUFFALO!
HOLD UP! PLEASE! I'M SHORT AND I'VE GOT SHORT LEGS!
AFRICAN BUFFALO LIVE IN THE MOUNTAINS, JUST LIKE AUSTRALIAN BUFFALO DO.
WHAT ABOUT THE RANGE, WHERE THE DEER AND ANTELOPE PLAY?*
ON TOP OF A MOUNTAIN?
BU-BU-BU-BUF-FALO?!
YIKES!
YOU MUST BE CAREFUL! A BUFFALO CAN BE A VERY DANGEROUS ANIMAL, LIKE A LION, EH?

(*) REFERENCING THE FAMOUS LINE FROM THE SONG "HOME ON THE RANGE:" "OH GIVE ME A HOME / WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM / WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE PLAY ...."


THANK YOU, OYAMADA.
MR. RYKARD, WHY DON'T YOU?
IT'S A BUSHBACK ANTELOPE! WHO WANTS THE HONOR? SHOOT QUICKLY!
BEST NOT TO TALK ABOUT THAT, THOUGH.
RANGE, ABOUT 300 METERS. THIS IS TOO EASY. I HAD HARDER DURING THE WAR.
OYAMADA!
AT THAT MOMENT, I SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT MY GOOD FRIEND OYAMADA HAD COME ON THIS SAFARI FOR A PURPOSE OTHER THAN BIG GAME HUNTING. HE WAS AFTER HIS MENTOR, MR. RYKARD -- BUT WHY?
PSST! DON'T!

HE HAD BEEN SO RESERVED ON THE TRIP OVER, BUT NOW HE SEEMED TO BE FULL OF ENERGY ... A MURDEROUS SPIRIT. IT WAS SCARY TO SEE.
HE HAD RYKARD DEAD IN HIS SIGHTS. ALL IT WOULD HAVE TOOK WAS ONE TRIGGER PULL ....
AH! A BIG BUCK!
WHY, OYAMADA? WHY?

RIGHT NOW!
ENOUGH ALREADY!
OUT!
SKNZXXX ...
WHAT'S READY?
IT'S READY, FOLKS!
WHAT DID I DO? I WAS JUST SLEEPING!
COM-ING!
BREAK-FAST TIME!
THAT MEANS ... !
IT'S HOT WATER FOR WASHING YOUR HANDS.
TO HUNT GAME.
HEY, OMAYADA? WHY ARE YOU HERE?
... AND I WON'T ASK EITHER! *NOM-NOM-NOM* ...
AW MAN, THIS IS GOOD! I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS ...

THAT'S ALL I'M GOING TO SAY.
IT'S A ONCE IN A LIFETIME CHANCE.
ENOUGH TALK. LET'S EAT.
PLEASE DO NOT FORGET TO SHOOT ONLY THE MALES! IF YOU KILL A FEMALE AND IT HAS A CALF IT WILL DIE WITHOUT ITS MOTHER!
ONLY MALES ....
YOU MAY SHOOT ALL THE MALES YOU WANT, BUT NO FEMALES!

WHUMP!!!

THAT'S AN ANTHILL?!

SO SORRY! I GOT CARRIED AWAY WITH MY TALK AND RAN INTO AN ANTHILL!

WHAT TH--?!

THEY GET TO BE QUITE LARGE HERE, SIR, AS YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF.

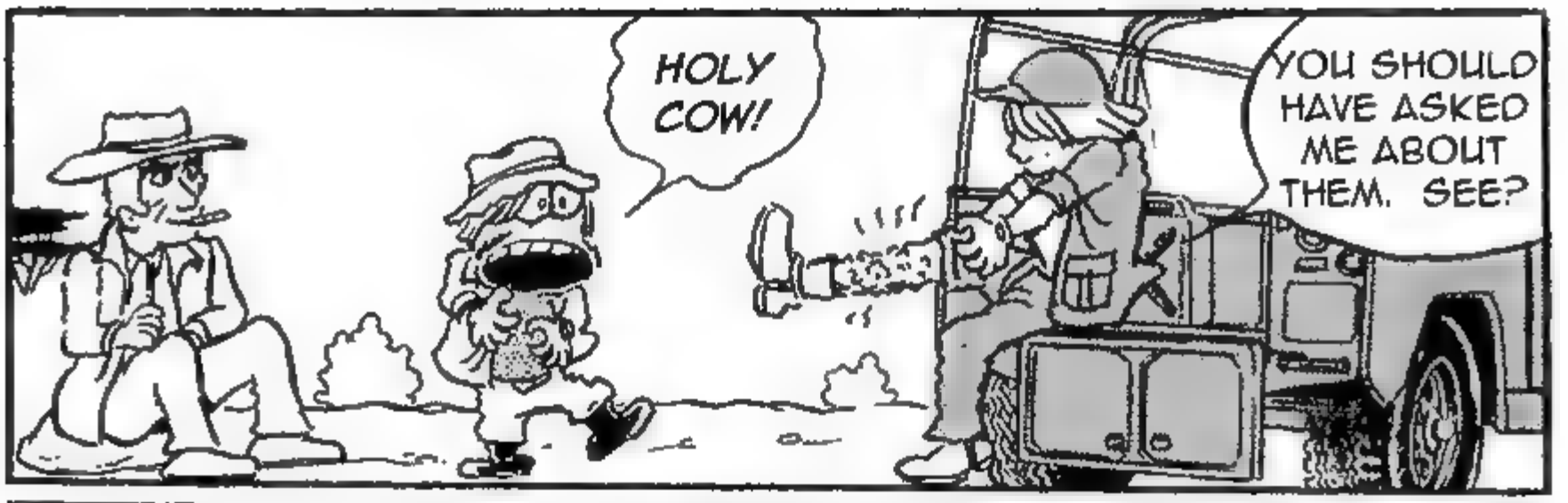
IT IS ACTUALY A DRY RIVERBED THAT FILLS DURING FLASH FLOODS.

!

NOW THIS IS BETTER! WIDE AND SMOOTH! YOU COULD TURN THIS INTO AN 8-LANE FREEWAY!

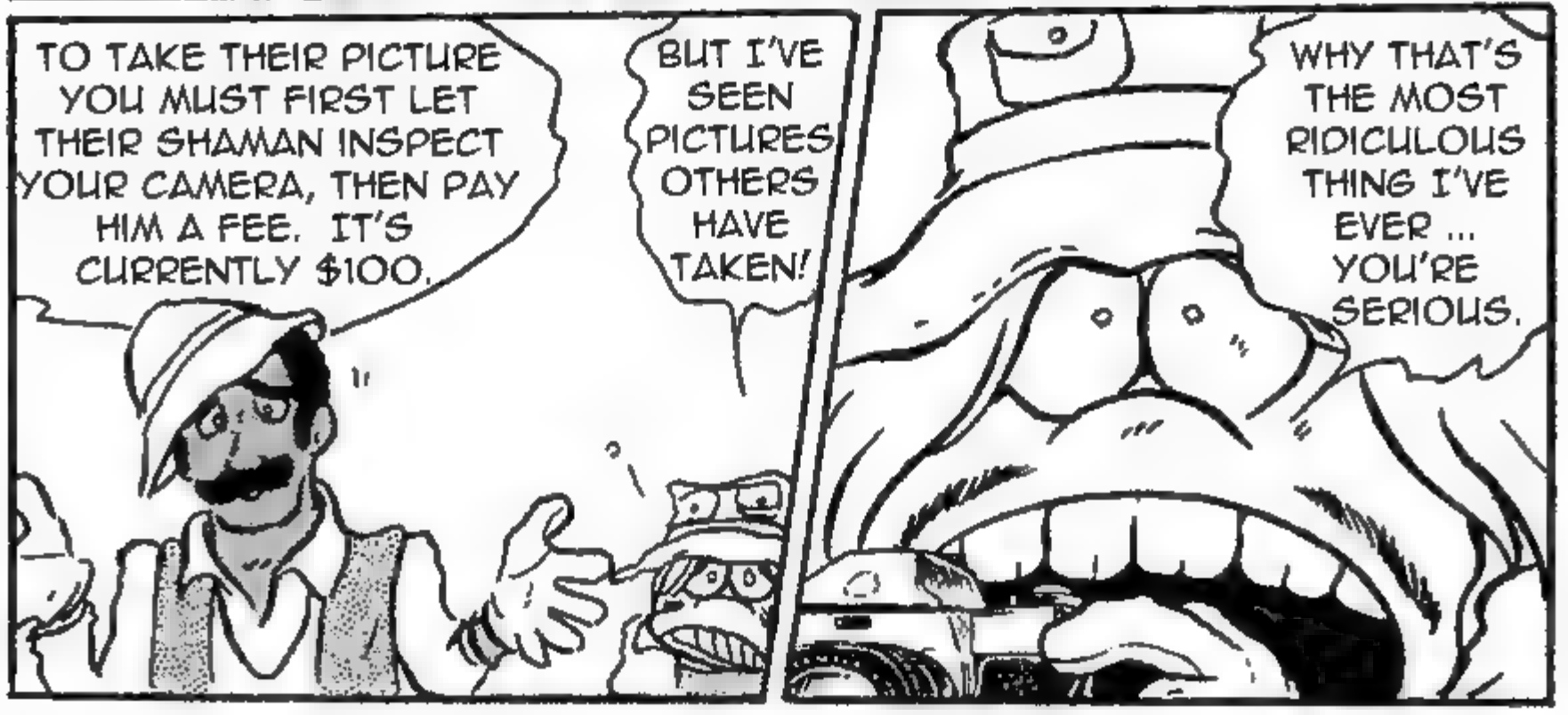
THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

HEY!
I WOULDN'T DO THAT.
IT HAS MANY SMALL THORNS THAT CURVE INWARD. IF YOU GET SNAGGED IN ONE YOU HAVE TO STOP AND NOT STRUGGLE.
I WARNED YOU. THIS IS THE "WAIT-A-BIT" BUSH. ITS NAME COMES FROM WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.
YOU CAN WORK YOURSELF FREE BUT IT TAKES TIME AND QUITE A BIT OF PATIENCE. HENCE THE NAME, THE "WAIT-A-BIT" BUSH.
... AND THEY BITE!
"LADYBIRDS," NOT LADY-BUGS ...
AND THE LADY-BUGS?


HOLY COW!
YOU SHOULD HAVE ASKED ME ABOUT THEM. SEE?

MASAI.
WHO ARE THEY?
EVEN FIREFLIES CHOOSE WHAT THEY LIKE.
SO WHY DIDN'T ANY OF THEM BITE ME?

THEN THEY'D HAVE KILLED YOU. THEY THINK CAMERAS STEAL PEOPLE'S SOULS.
BUT ALL I WANTED WAS A--
NO! YOU CAN'T DO THAT! THEY'LL BE OFFENDED!
I WANNA PICTURE!


TO TAKE THEIR PICTURE YOU MUST FIRST LET THEIR SHAMAN INSPECT YOUR CAMERA, THEN PAY HIM A FEE. IT'S CURRENTLY $100.
BUT I'VE SEEN PICTURES OTHERS HAVE TAKEN!
WHY THAT'S THE MOST RIDICULOUS THING I'VE EVER ... YOU'RE SERIOUS.

MARRY INTO THE *TRIBE?!?!* WHY ON EARTH WOULD I EVER WANT TO DO *THAT?!?!*

WELL I'M GLAD TO KNOW THAT THERE'S A --***WHAT?!***

THAT'S THE WAY IT IS, UNLESS YOU WOULD RATHER MARRY INTO THE TRIBE.

$100?! THAT'S HIGHWAY ROBBERY!

I CAME HERE TO SAFARI, NOT GET HITCHED!

AHH, I'LL PASS.

YOU GIVE TEN COWS TO HER FATHER AS A DOWRY, HE BRINGS YOU FIVE GOATS PLUS HER, THEN THE CEREMONY!

AHM, YEAH.

I SEE YOUNG OYAMADA HAS PICKED HIS FRIEND WELL DESPITE SOME OF YOUR HABITS.

UHH, THANK YOU, MR. RYKARD.

SMART MOVE, MR. MATSUMOTO.

IT'S ONE I NEED TO TELL.

SURE! BY ALL MEANS!

I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE A MANGA ARTIST, WHICH ALSO MEANS YOU'RE A WRITER. CARE TO HEAR A STORY OF MINE?

... BUT I WAS SO CONVINCED HE WAS GUILTY, AND I LET MY INSTINCTS GET THE BETTER OF ME.
RIGHT AFTER THE WAR, I KILLED AN INNOCENT MAN FOR SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE ELSE DID ...
I WAS SO DRIVEN BY MY CONVICTION THAT I ACTED AUTOMATICALLY ... AND AN INNOCENT MAN DIED.

... AND WHO HAD THE BETTER PLANE.

I DIDN'T INTEND TO KILL HIM THERE. I JUST WANTED TO PROVE WHO WAS BETTER ...

HE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE ANY AMMO FOR HIS GUNS.

HE GOT MY SIX* FIRST, WHICH MEANT HE WON. HE BEAT ME ...

... AND HAD IT BEEN A REAL DOGFIGHT, I'D HAVE DIED.

(*) "HE GOT MY SIX" – SLANG FOR "HE GOT DIRECTLY BEHIND ME," WHICH IS THE IDEAL POSITION FOR SHOOTING DOWN AN ENEMY PLANE IN A DOGFIGHT.

I COULDN'T TAKE THAT, PLUS WHAT HAD HAPPENED WITH MEYERS AND THAT JAPANESE PAINTED HELLCAT.

WHAT MADE IT WORSE WAS THEY FOUND IT WAS THE JAP AIRFIELD MECHANIC FLYING THAT HELLCAT. HE WAS REALLY A EX-ARMY PILOT.

NO ... !

ONCE I GOT HIS SIX I ACTED AUTOMATICALLY ... AND I KILLED OYAMADA'S FATHER.

!!

I KILLED THE WRONG MAN FOR MEYER'S SAKE. I CAN'T GET THIS BLOOD OFF MY HANDS ...

I'VE LIVED WITH THAT GUILT ALL MY LIFE ... I KILLED AN INNOCENT MAN.

ATONEMENT, MR. MATSUMOTO ... AND TO GIVE YOUNG OYAMADA A SOLID CHANCE TO KILL ME IN TURN. I KNOW HE WANTS TO. I OWE IT TO HIS FATHER TO LET HIM.

IF ALL OF THIS IS TRUE, SIR, THEN WHY DID YOU HIRE HIM FOR YOUR COMPANY? WHY BRING HIM ON THIS SAFARI?

I'VE ALREADY PAID MY DEBT TO THE AUTHORITIES FOR WHAT I DID. HIS IS THE ONLY DEBT LEFT.

THERE CAN BE A "HUNTING ACCIDENT" OUT HERE AND NO ONE WILL QUESTION IT. HE'LL GO FREE.

NO ONE BELIEVES THAT, ESPECIALLY YOUNG OYAMADA ...

YOU SHOULD KNOW I WAS COURT-MARTIALED AND EXPELLED FROM THE NAVY FOR WHAT I DID. I COULDN'T HELP IT. IT WAS THE WAY I WAS TRAINED.

A GIRAFFE!

HUH?

WHAT?!

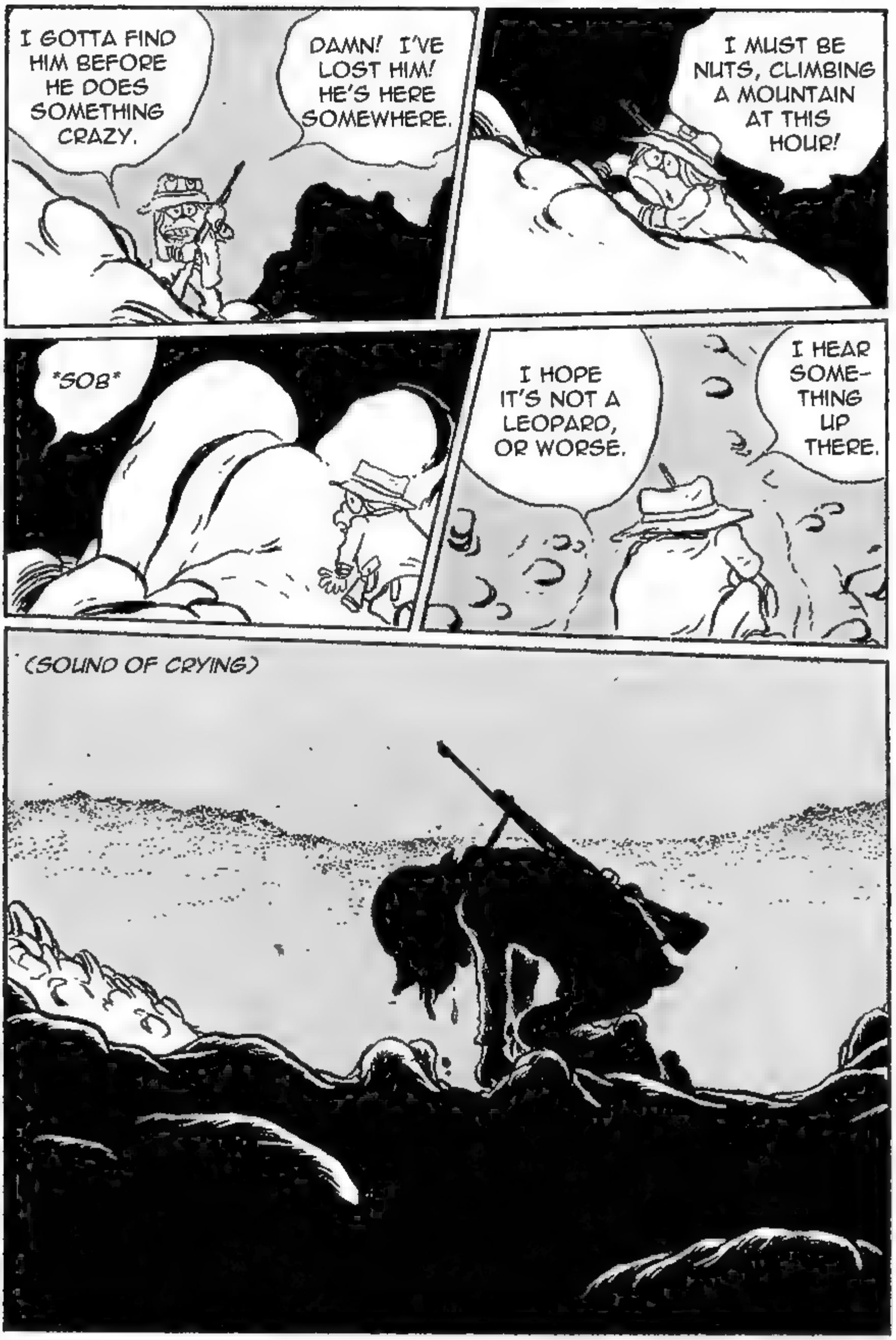
STOP! THAT'S A FEMALE!!

I REACTED! THAT'S ALL I DID! I ACTED ON INSTINCT!
I SAW IT POP OUT, AND IT WAS ALONE, AND I ...
I ...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! DID YOU CHECK?!?!
YOU NEED TO ACT AND NOT REACT, MR. OYAMADA! DO YOU HEAR ME?!
I'M SORRY ....
WE'LL HAVE TO SEE IF IT HAS A CALF AND KILL IT TOO. THE HERD WON'T NURSE IT.

WHAT A MESS.
I ....

OYA-
MADA?
I BETTER
FOLLOW
HIM.

THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED


I GOTTA FIND HIM BEFORE HE DOES SOMETHING CRAZY.
DAMN! I'VE LOST HIM! HE'S HERE SOMEWHERE.
I MUST BE NUTS, CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN AT THIS HOUR!
SOB
I HOPE IT'S NOT A LEOPARD, OR WORSE.
I HEAR SOME-THING UP THERE.
(SOUND OF CRYING)

... SO I'M GOING TO BURY MY HATE RIGHT HERE.

I CAN'T HATE HIM ANY MORE, KNOWING WHAT I NOW KNOW ...

NOW I UNDERSTAND NOT ONLY WHY YOU DIED, BUT *HOW.*

OH, FATHER! I CAME HERE TO AVENGE YOU BUT YOU DON'T NEED IT!

THAT'S WHY I'M BURYING MY HATE HERE. I'LL HATE NO MORE.

... BUT HOW ... *SOB* ... CAN I EVER PAY FOR MINE?

RYKARD'S ALREADY PAID FOR HIS CRIME ...

IT'S RAINING.

(MORE SOBBING)

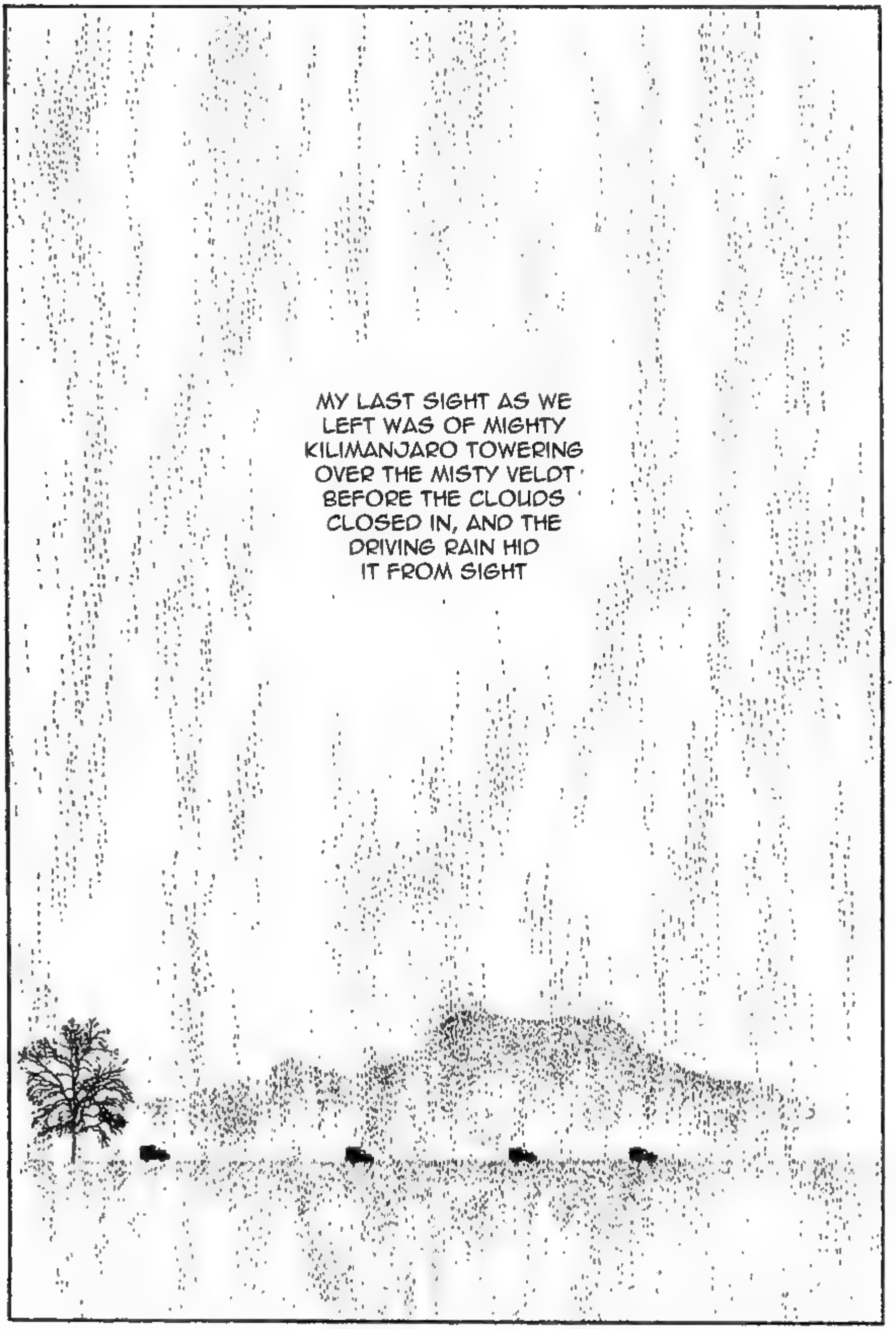
WE LOADED EVERYTHING UP AS FAST AS WE COULD AND LEFT MOUNT MERWA BEHIND FOR NAIROBI.

THINGS GOT CUT SHORT DUE TO AN EARLY START TO THE RAINY SEASON IN AFRICA.

BOTH MR. RYKARD AND YOUNG OYAMADA HAD TEARS IN THEIR EYES.

I PRETENDED NOT TO NOTICE, BUT I WAS HAPPY AND HOPEFUL FOR BOTH OF THEM.

I ALSO REFLECTED ON THE OFTEN TORTUROUS PATHS THAT MEN AND WOMEN SOMETIMES HAVE TO TAKE TO GET AT THE TRUTH.


MY LAST SIGHT AS WE LEFT WAS OF MIGHTY KILIMANJARO TOWERING OVER THE MISTY VELDT BEFORE THE CLOUDS CLOSED IN, AND THE DRIVING RAIN HID IT FROM SIGHT

SOMEWHERE IN KENYA LIES A MOUNTAIN THAT MEN CALL BY ONE NAME BUT THAT I'LL ALWAYS KNOW BY ANOTHER.

I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER IT AS THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED.

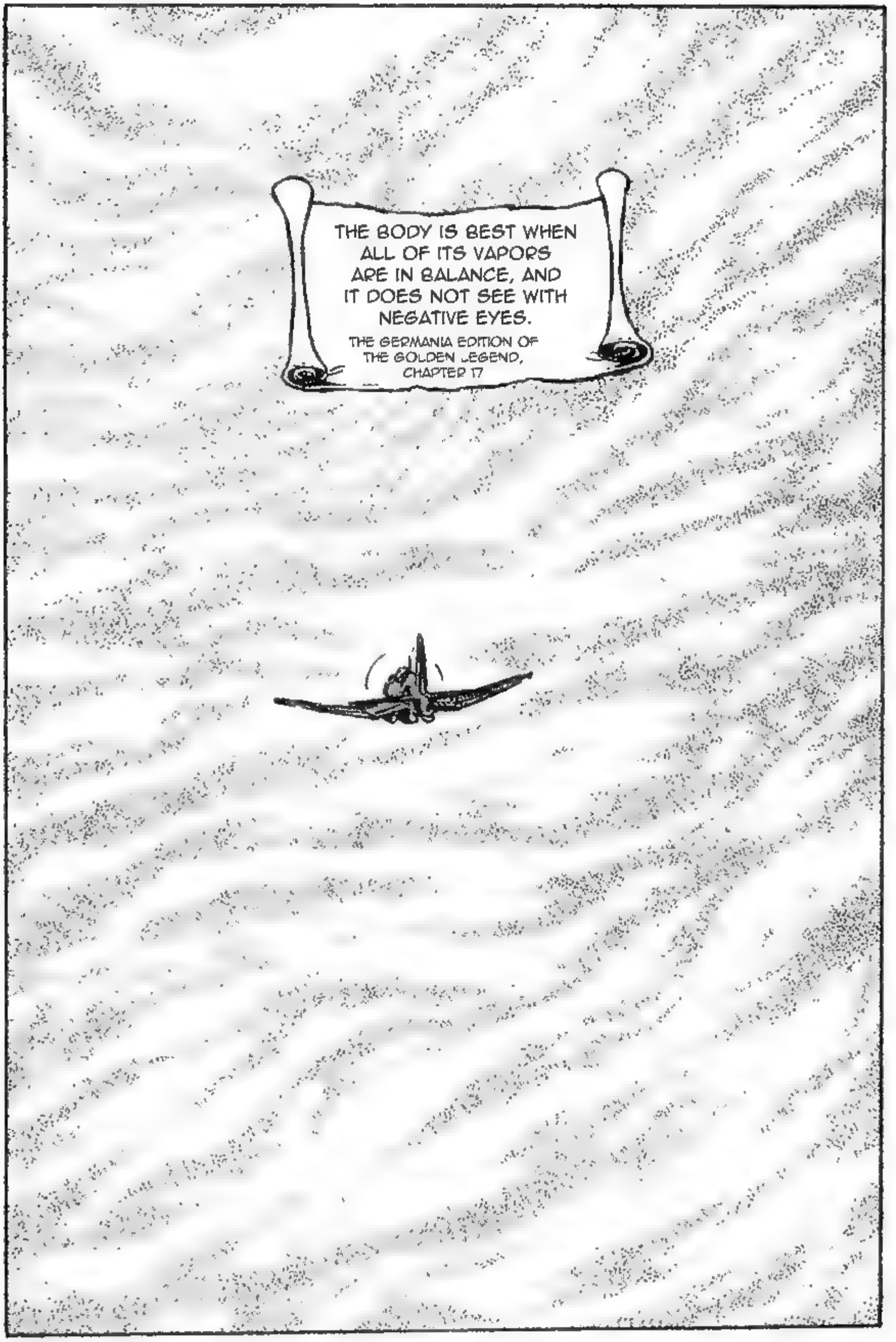
(Published in Big Comic Original, December 20, 1976 issue)

THE MOUNTAIN WHERE REVENGE WAS BURIED

LEIJI
MATSUMOTO
PRESENTS

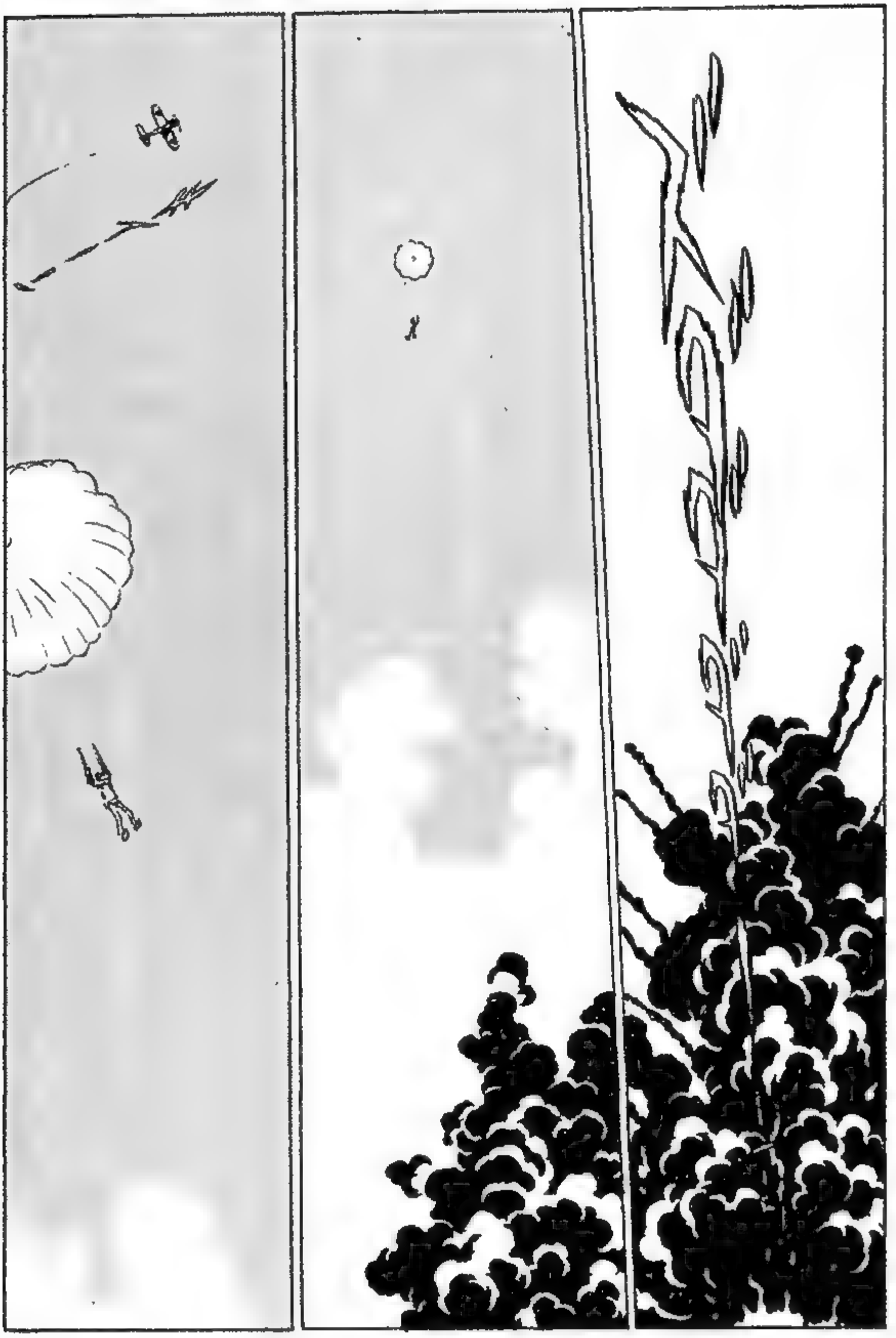
THE COCKPIT

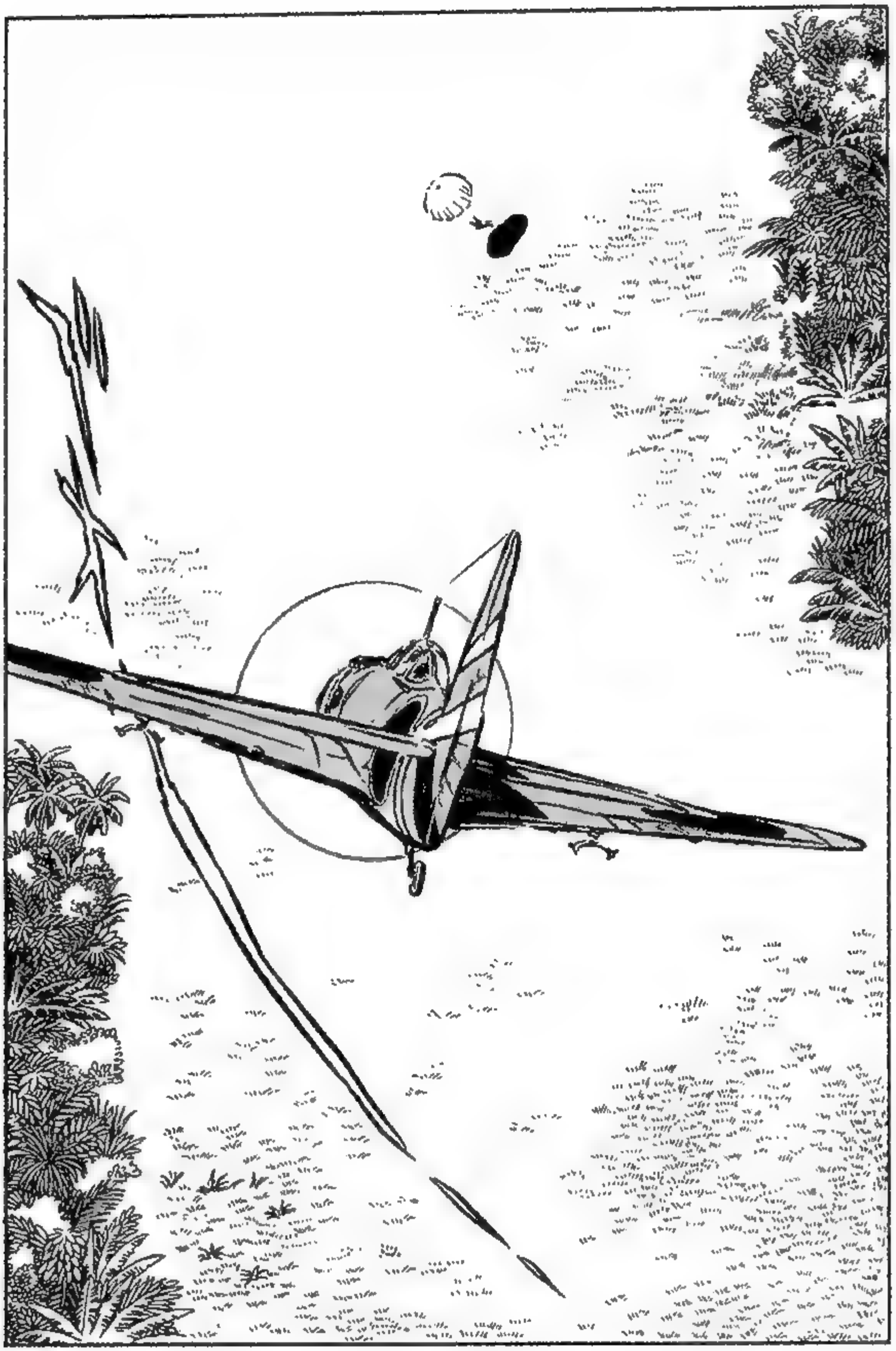
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)


THE BODY IS BEST WHEN ALL OF ITS VAPORS ARE IN BALANCE, AND IT DOES NOT SEE WITH NEGATIVE EYES.
THE GERMANIA EDITION OF THE GOLDEN LEGEND, CHAPTER 17

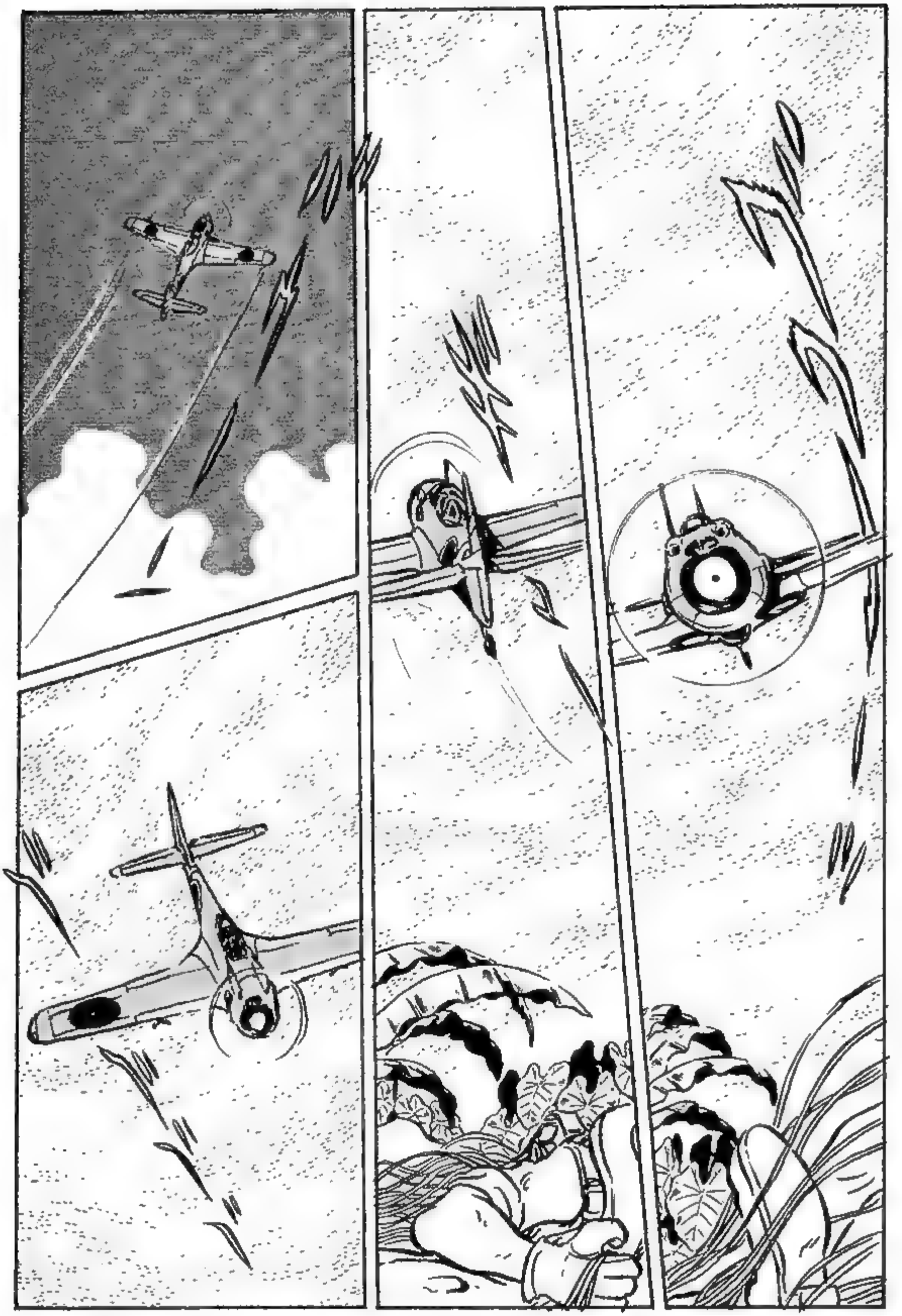
THE NIGHT MAYFLY
(PART 1 OF 2)

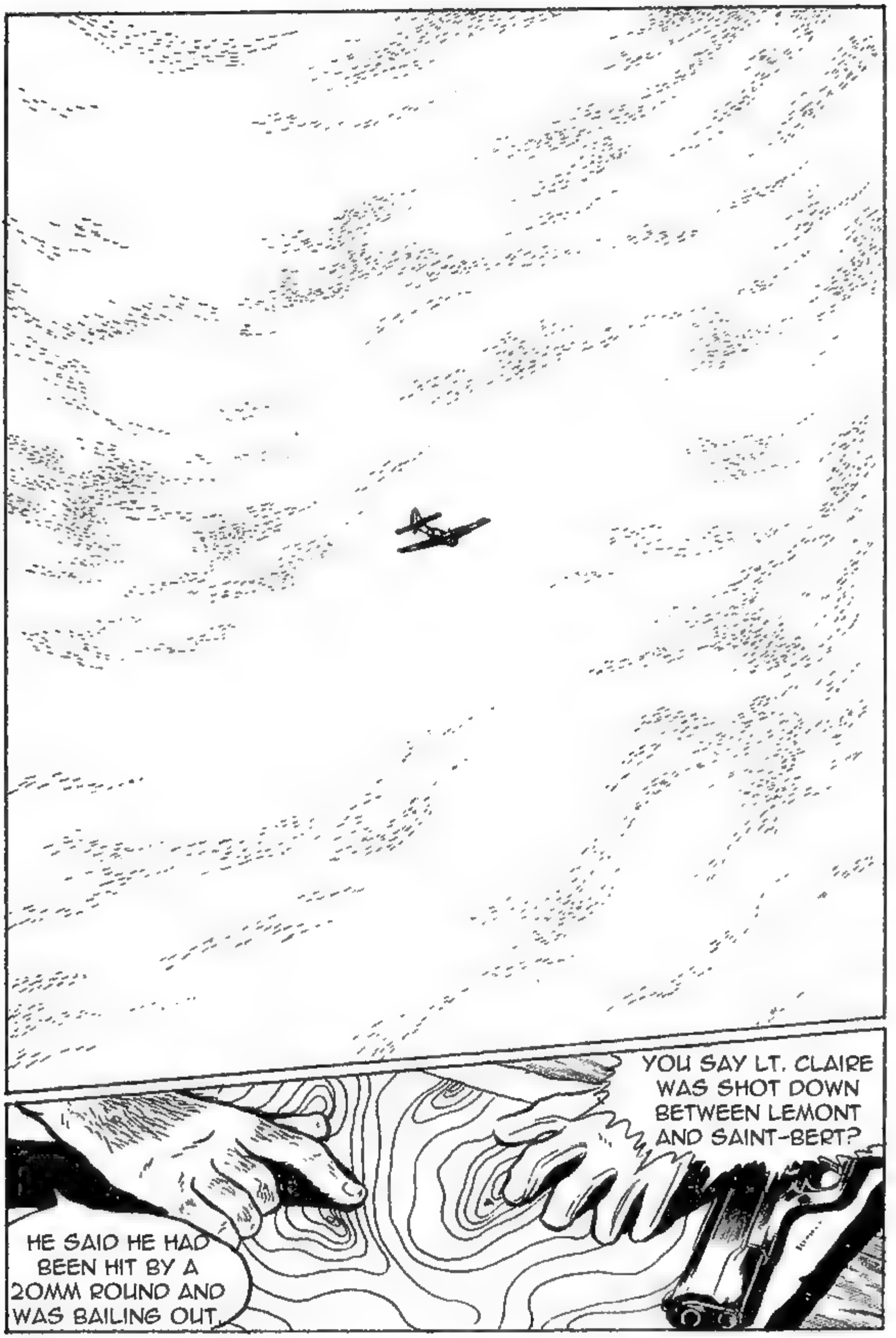
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)



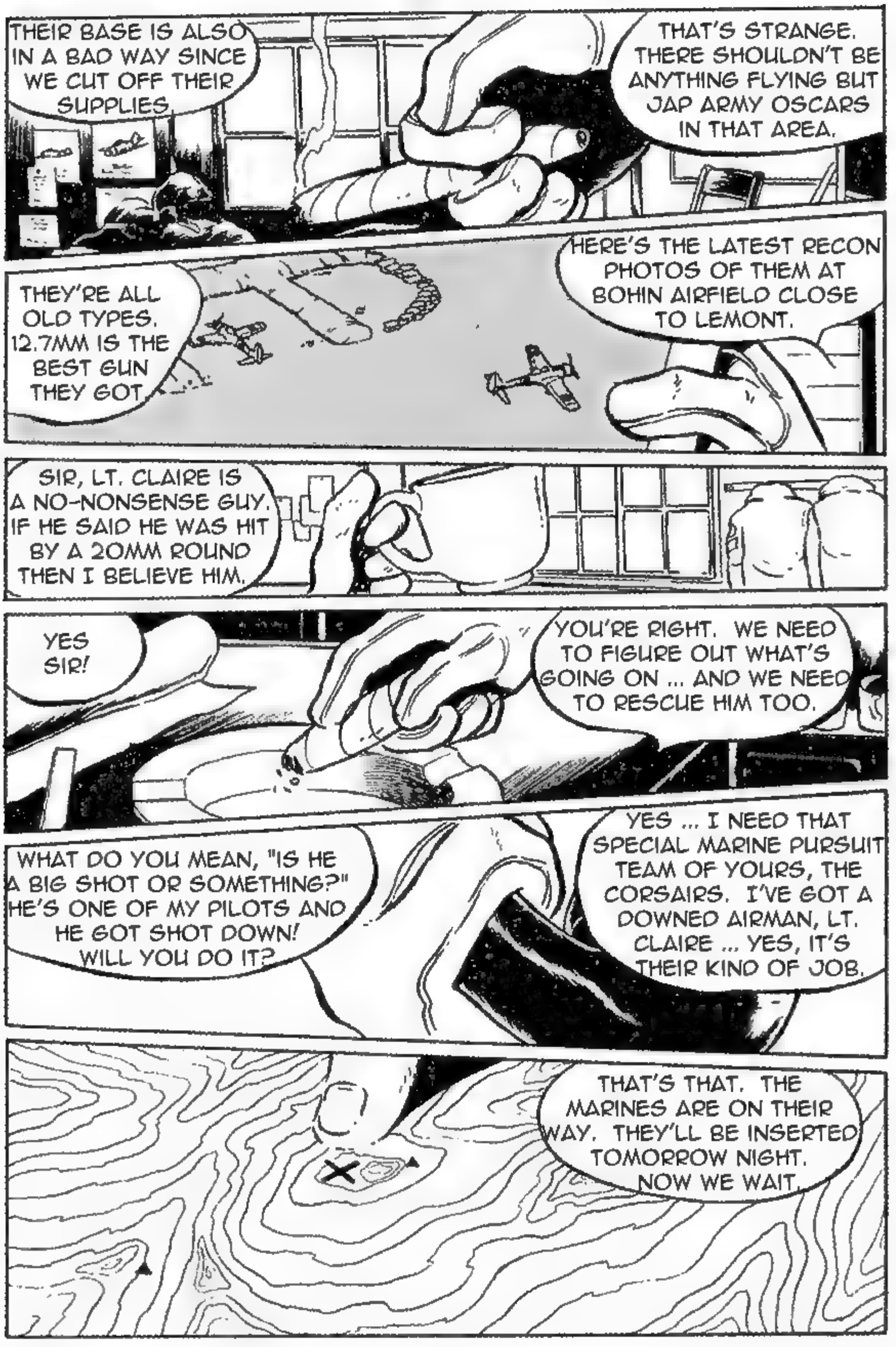


THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)




YOU SAY LT. CLAIRE WAS SHOT DOWN BETWEEN LEMONT AND SAINT-BERT?
HE SAID HE HAD BEEN HIT BY A 20MM ROUND AND WAS BAILING OUT.

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)


THEIR BASE IS ALSO IN A BAD WAY SINCE WE CUT OFF THEIR SUPPLIES.
THAT'S STRANGE. THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANYTHING FLYING BUT JAP ARMY OSCARS IN THAT AREA.
THEY'RE ALL OLD TYPES. 12.7MM IS THE BEST GUN THEY GOT.
HERE'S THE LATEST RECON PHOTOS OF THEM AT BOHIN AIRFIELD CLOSE TO LEMONT.
SIR, LT. CLAIRE IS A NO-NONSENSE GUY. IF HE SAID HE WAS HIT BY A 20MM ROUND THEN I BELIEVE HIM.
YES SIR!
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S GOING ON ... AND WE NEED TO RESCUE HIM TOO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "IS HE A BIG SHOT OR SOMETHING?" HE'S ONE OF MY PILOTS AND HE GOT SHOT DOWN! WILL YOU DO IT?
YES ... I NEED THAT SPECIAL MARINE PURSUIT TEAM OF YOURS, THE CORSAIRS. I'VE GOT A DOWNED AIRMAN, LT. CLAIRE ... YES, IT'S THEIR KIND OF JOB.
THAT'S THAT. THE MARINES ARE ON THEIR WAY. THEY'LL BE INSERTED TOMORROW NIGHT. NOW WE WAIT.

CLAIRE'S CORSAIR HAD ITS TAIL STABILIZERS MOUNTED UP A BIT AS A TEST. IF YOU FIND ANY WRECKAGE LET ME KNOW.

ck Elevator
xperimental

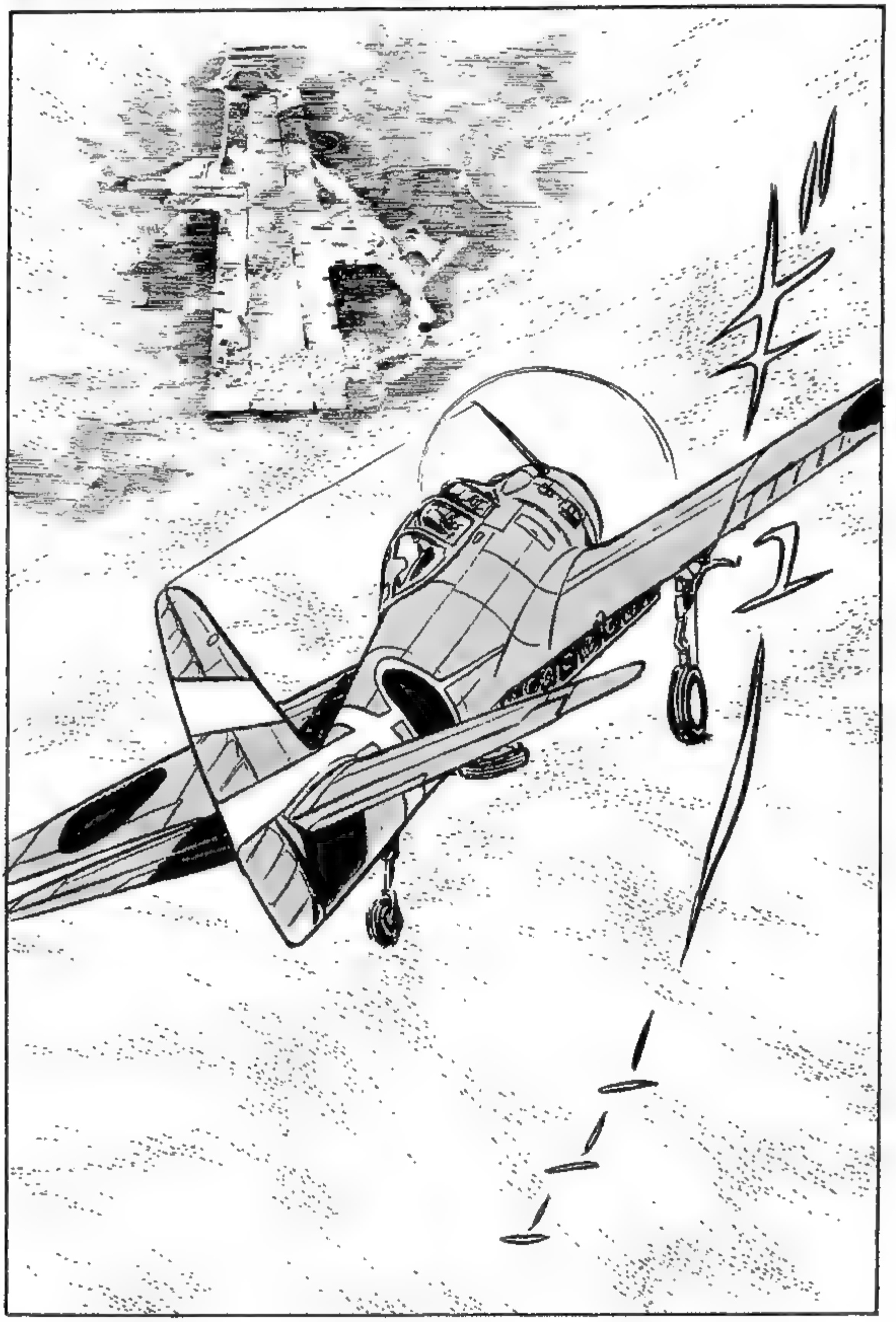
WE ALSO HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE JAP'S NEW 20MM CANNONS.

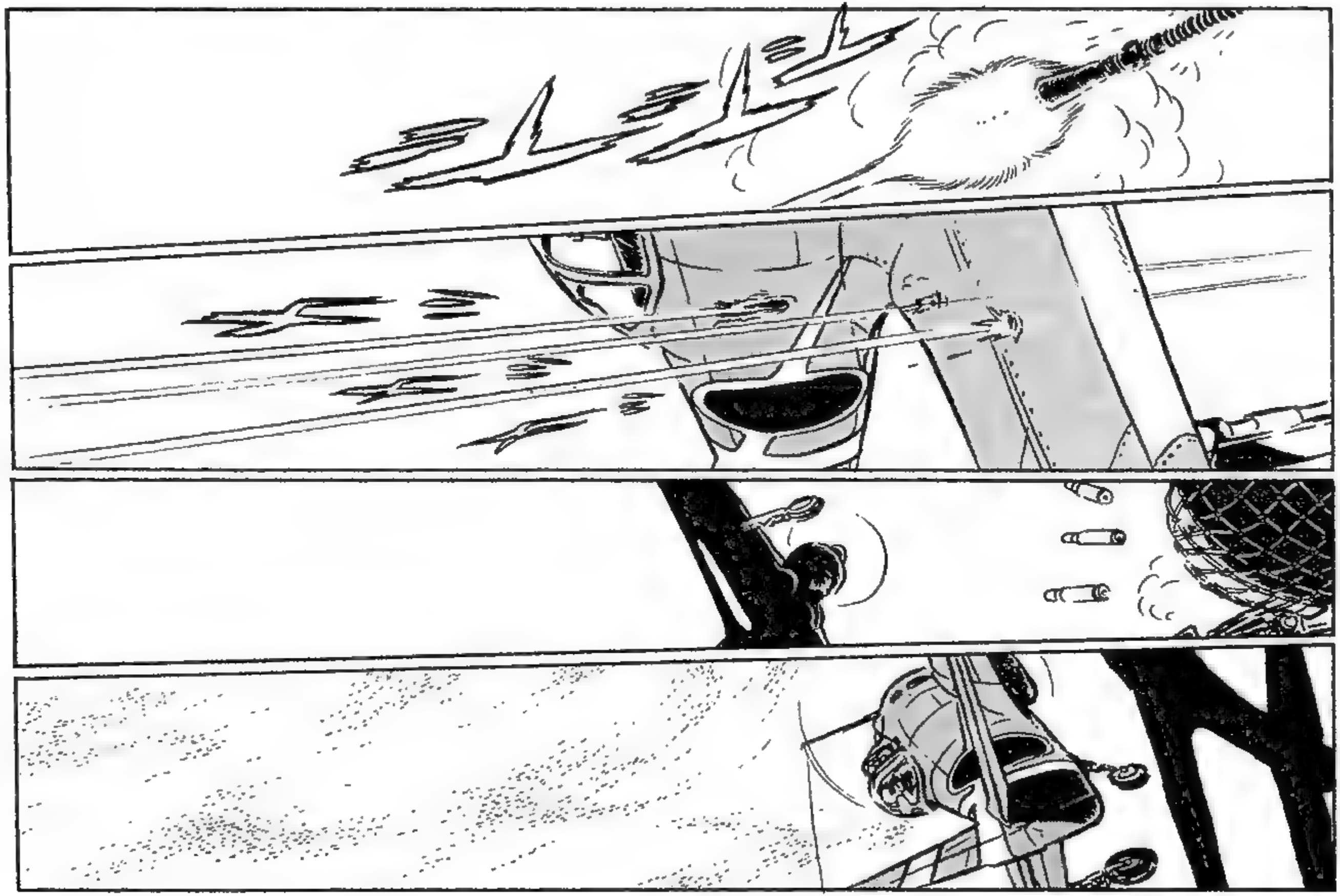
MAYBE WE'LL FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW HE WAS DOWNED, WHY, AND EXACTLY WITH WHAT.

IT'S A SHAME ABOUT CLAIRE. HE WAS A GOOD PILOT, AND THE END OF THE WAR WAS SO CLOSE. THAT'S WHY I WANT TO TRY TO SAVE HIM.

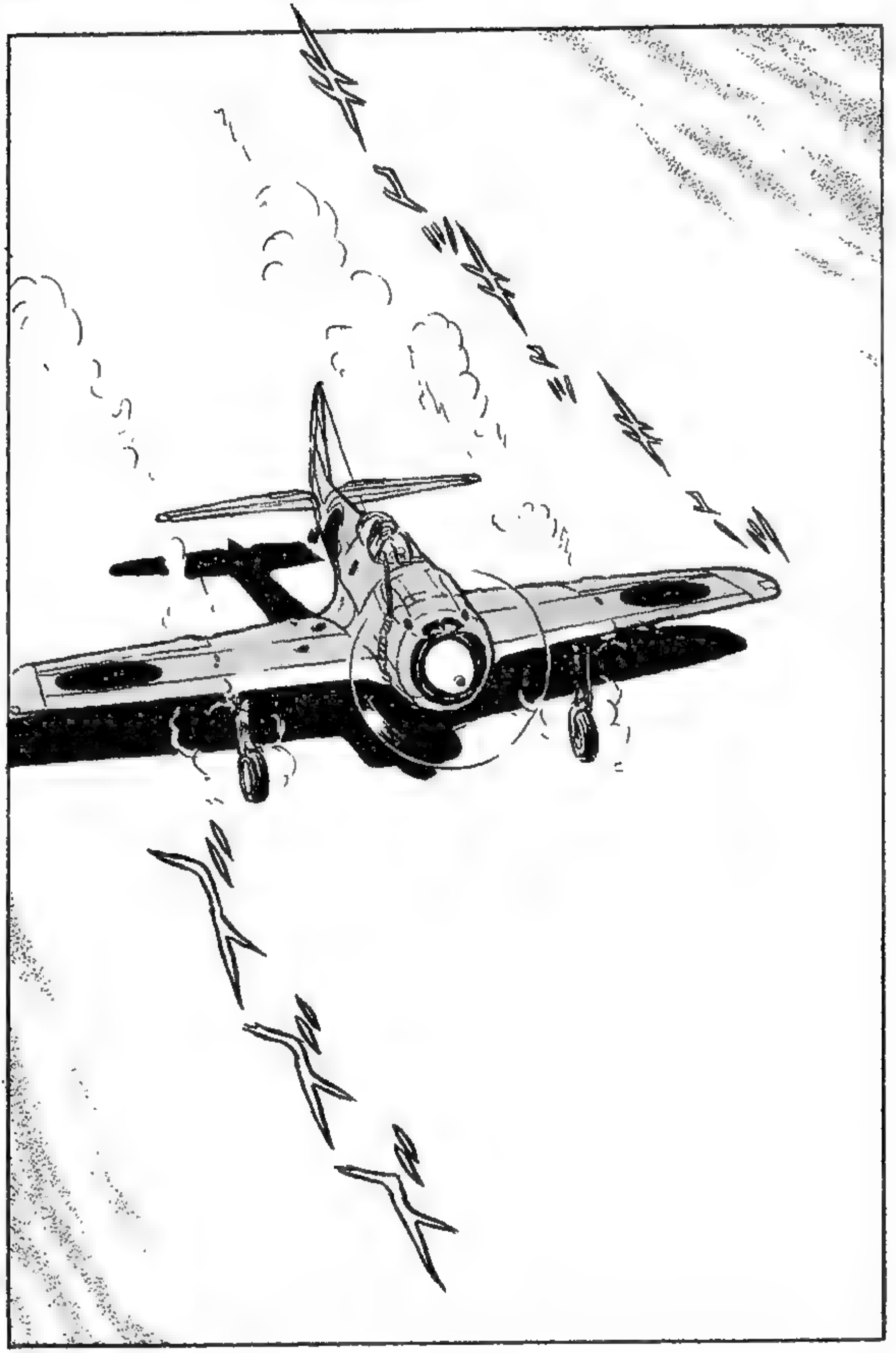
I WANT THEM. I WANT THE JAP THAT SHOT HIM DOWN, AND HIS NEW 20MM CANNONS TO BOOT.

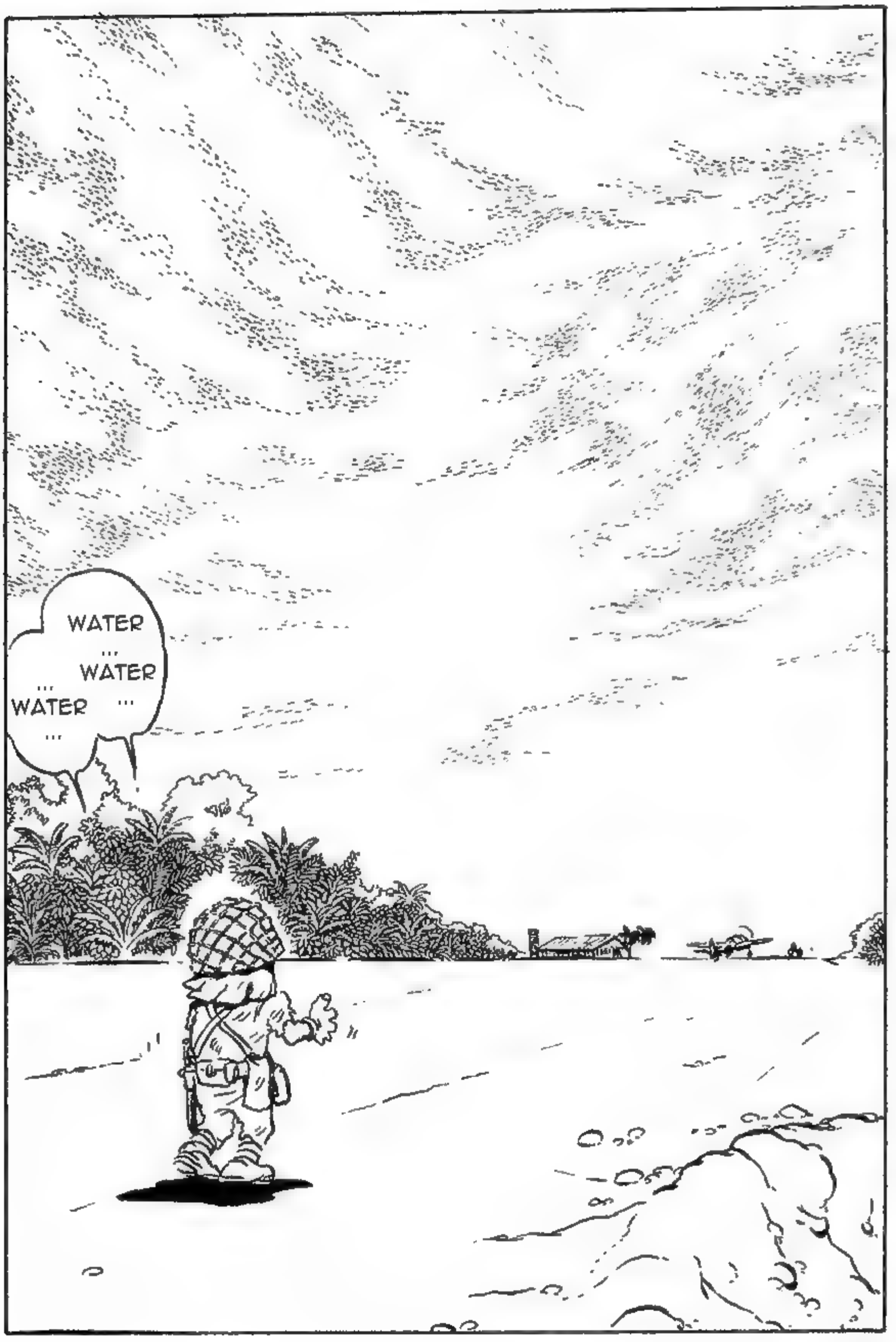
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)





THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)




WATER
...
WATER
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WATER
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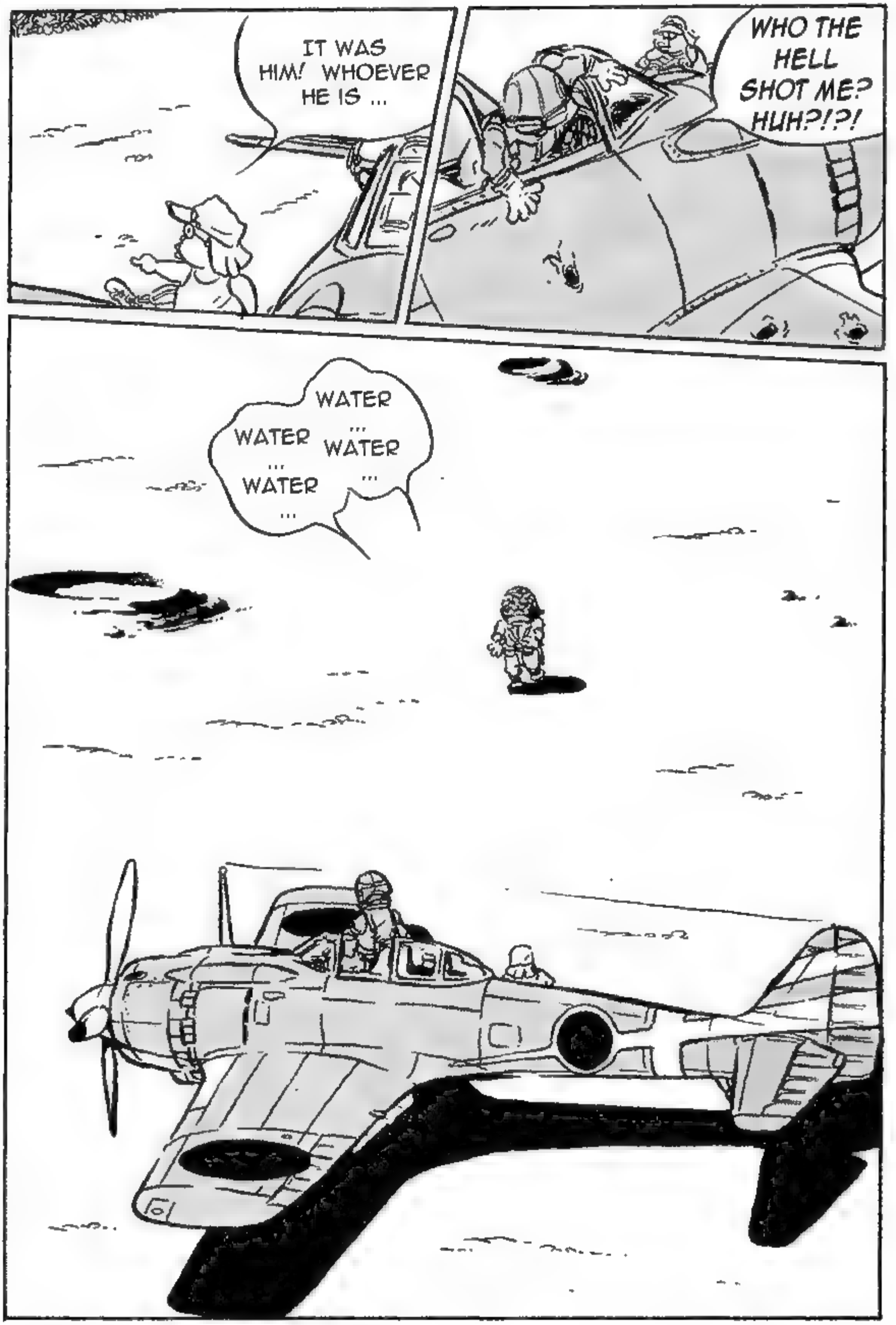
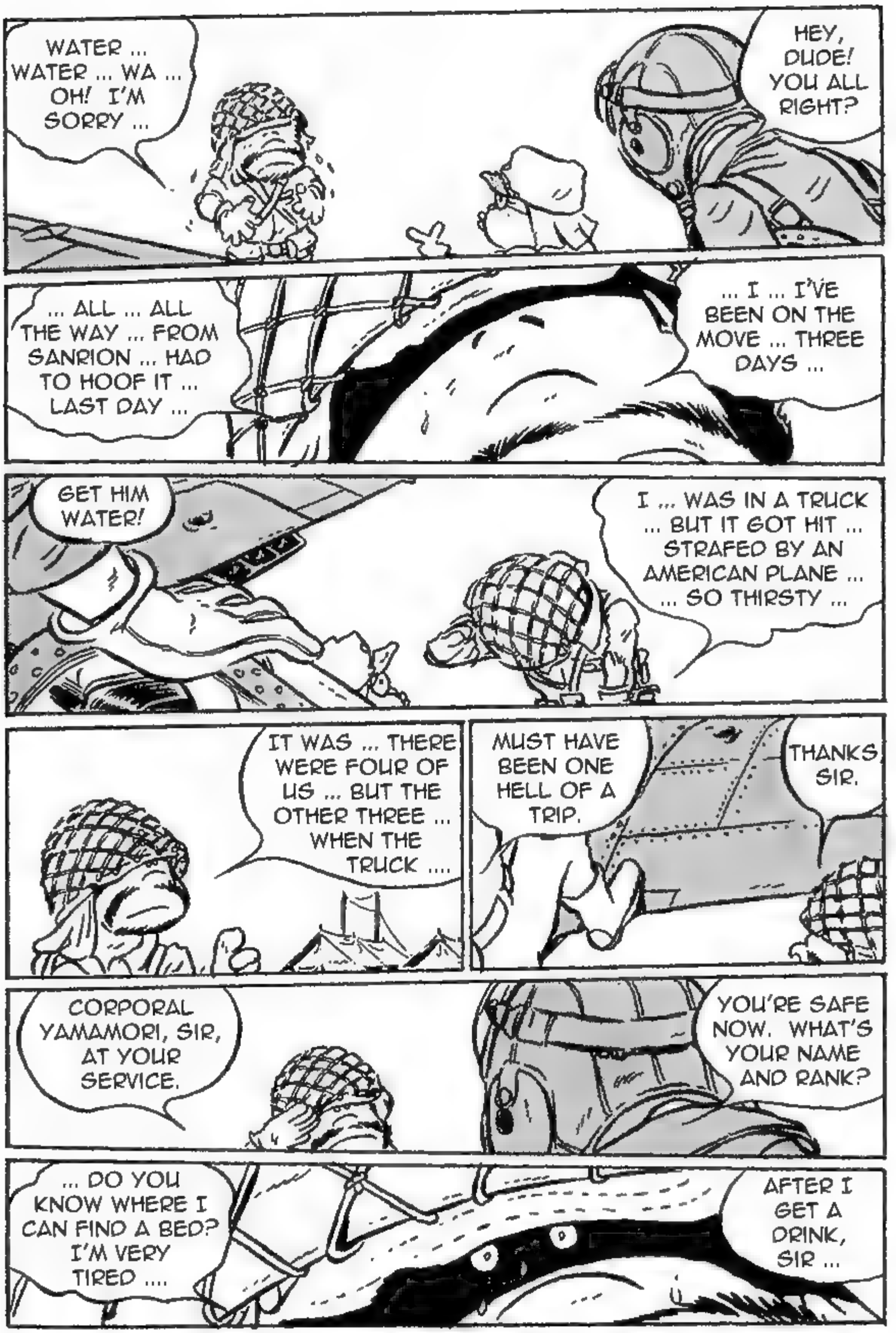
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)




WATER ... WATER ... WA ... OH! I'M SORRY ...
HEY, DUDE! YOU ALL RIGHT?
... ALL ... ALL THE WAY ... FROM SANRION ... HAD TO HOOF IT ... LAST DAY ...
... I ... I'VE BEEN ON THE MOVE ... THREE DAYS ...
GET HIM WATER!
I ... WAS IN A TRUCK ... BUT IT GOT HIT ... STRAFED BY AN AMERICAN PLANE ... ... SO THIRSTY ...
IT WAS ... THERE WERE FOUR OF US ... BUT THE OTHER THREE ... WHEN THE TRUCK ....
MUST HAVE BEEN ONE HELL OF A TRIP.
THANKS SIR.
CORPORAL YAMAMORI, SIR, AT YOUR SERVICE.
YOU'RE SAFE NOW. WHAT'S YOUR NAME AND RANK?
... DO YOU KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND A BED? I'M VERY TIRED ....
AFTER I GET A DRINK, SIR ...

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)

THANX.
I'LL FIND YOU SOMEWHERE TO NAP.
EIGHTEEN YEARS, SIR. STARTED AS A GRUNT AND I'M STILL A GRUNT.
HOW LONG YOU BEEN IN?
YES SIR.
YOU'RE A REALLY GOOD SHOT.
YES SIR.
I THINK OUR BASE DEFENSE BOYS MIGHT LIKE TO SEE YOU, ONCE YOU'RE FIXED UP.
WELL, AS TIGHT AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT WHEN HITTING A MOVING TARGET.
NICE AND TIGHT SHOT PATTERN.
GOOD! GET THE CORPORAL FIXED UP AND THEN FIX MY PLANE NEXT. GOT IT?
I'VE GOT FOOD AND WATER FOR HIM, SIR!
AS FOR ME, I GOTTA USE ANOTHER PLANE UNTIL THIS--

I'VE ALREADY LET THE HIGHER UPS KNOW ABOUT THIS MOD.

I MODIFIED THE NOSE SO WE COULD STICK THEM IN THERE THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ROOM IN THE WINGS.

YEAH, BUT IT TOOK SOME DOING.

HEY! THAT'S NO NORMAL HAYABUSA!* YOU'VE ADDED 20MM GUNS!

YEAH, WELL I WASN'T THERE WHEN THEY FIRST DESIGNED THESE.

IT'S A GOOD IDEA. THEY SHOULD HAVE DONE IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THE LIMITS FORCE ME TO BE INVENTIVE. IT'S A REAL CHALLANGE KEEPING THESE OLD BIRDS GOING.

I'LL BET.

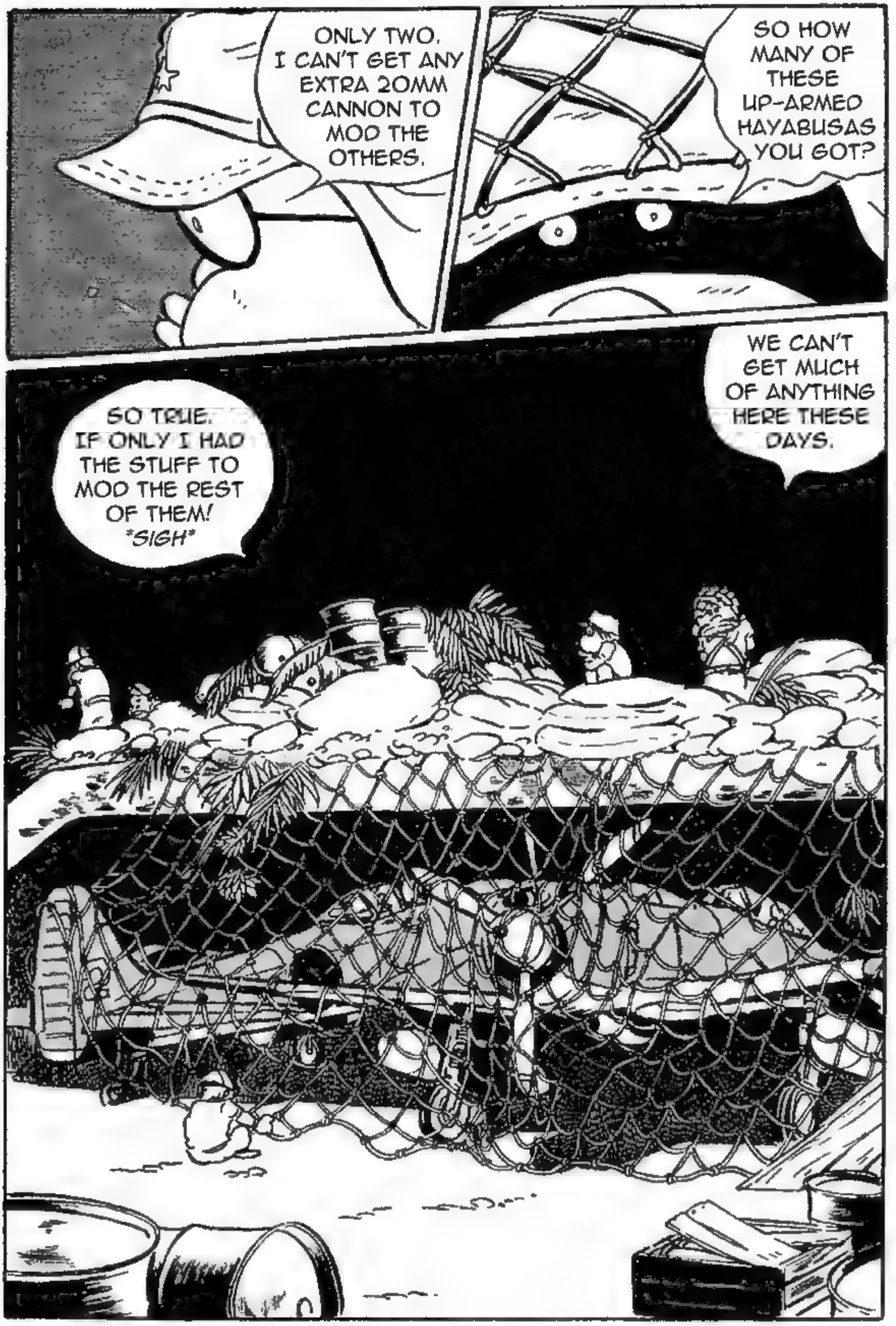
TO TELL THE TRUTH I FIND IT A CHALL-ENGE.

BUT I'M STUCK IN THE PHILI-PPINES TOO.

A GENIUS LIKE THAT STUCK OUT HERE.

(*) *HAYABUSA* - THE JAPANESE NAME FOR THE IMPERIAL ARMY AIR CORPS NAKAJIMA KI-43 FIGHTER, ALLIED CODE NAME "OSCAR"

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)


ONLY TWO. I CAN'T GET ANY EXTRA 20MM CANNON TO MOD THE OTHERS.
SO HOW MANY OF THESE UP-ARMED HAYABUSAS YOU GOT?
SO TRUE. IF ONLY I HAD THE STUFF TO MOD THE REST OF THEM! *SIGH*
WE CAN'T GET MUCH OF ANYTHING HERE THESE DAYS.

!!
PROBABLY THOSE FILIPINO GUERILLAS AGAIN.
AN ATTACK OF SOME KIND.
WHAT IS IT?
THE ATTACK IS ON THE FAR SIDE, AWAY FROM THEM. I THINK THEY'LL BE OKAY.
THE PLANES! YOU THINK YAMAMORI CAN HANDLE IT?
HEY, THAT'S AMERICAN SUB-MACHINE GUN FIRE. I DIDN'T THINK THE GUERILLAS HAD THOSE.
YOU'RE RIGHT. THE BEST THEY HAVE ARE SINGLE SHOT RIFLES.

MAYBE THEY'VE FIGURED OUT MY LITTLE MOD TO THOSE TWO HAYABUSAS AND WANT A CLOSER LOOK.

WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD THEY ATTACK KOJI AIRFIELD NOW?

HMMM. NOW IT SOUNDS LIKE THERE'S TWO DIFFERENT GROUPS.

JEEZUZ! THERE'S JAP SOLDIERS ALL OVER THE PLACE, AND WITH HEAVY MACHINE GUNS TO BOOT!

SHUT UP AND KEEP FIRING! WE CAN'T LET OURSELVES GET PINNED DOWN OR WE'VE HAD IT!

THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SIMPLE RESCUE OF A DOWNED PILOT! FUCKIN' 'A'!

SOMEBODY'S STARTING A PLANE OVER THERE!!

WHAT TH—?!

YES SIR!!!

STOP THEM BEFORE THEY WRECK YOUR PLANES!

YAMANAKA! WHAT FOOL IS TRYING TO FLY IN A FUCKIN' FIREFIGHT?!

OH ...

OUR PILOTS KNOW THAT IF THE AIRFIELD IS EVER ATTA ...

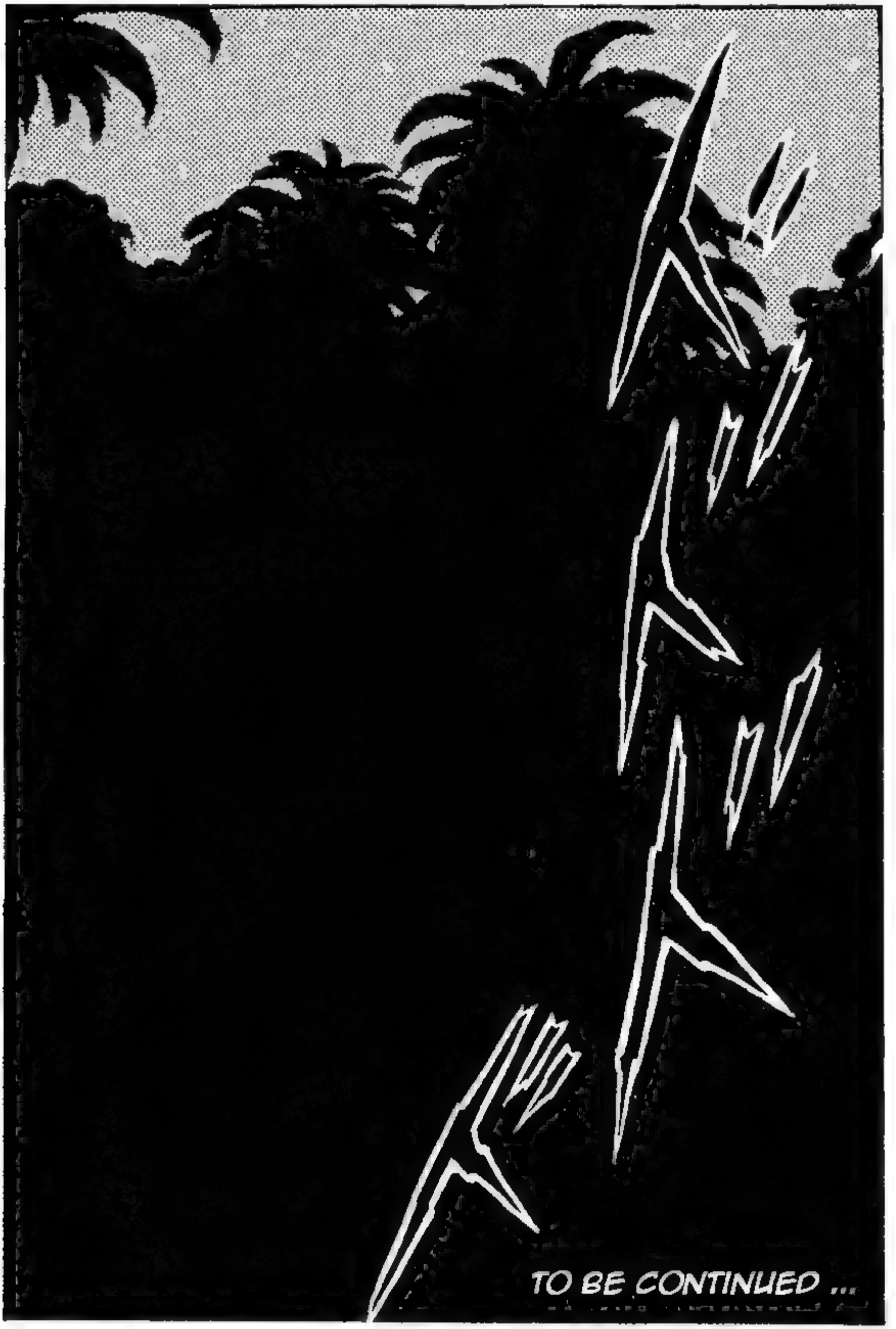
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 1 OF 2)

IN TIMES OF UTTER CHAOS ONLY INSECTS POSSESS THE ABILITY TO ACCURATELY IDENTIFY THEIR OPPONENTS. THIS IS TRUE FOR BOTH THEIR ENEMIES AND ALLIES.

– LE FABRE, 1868

WHAT?!?

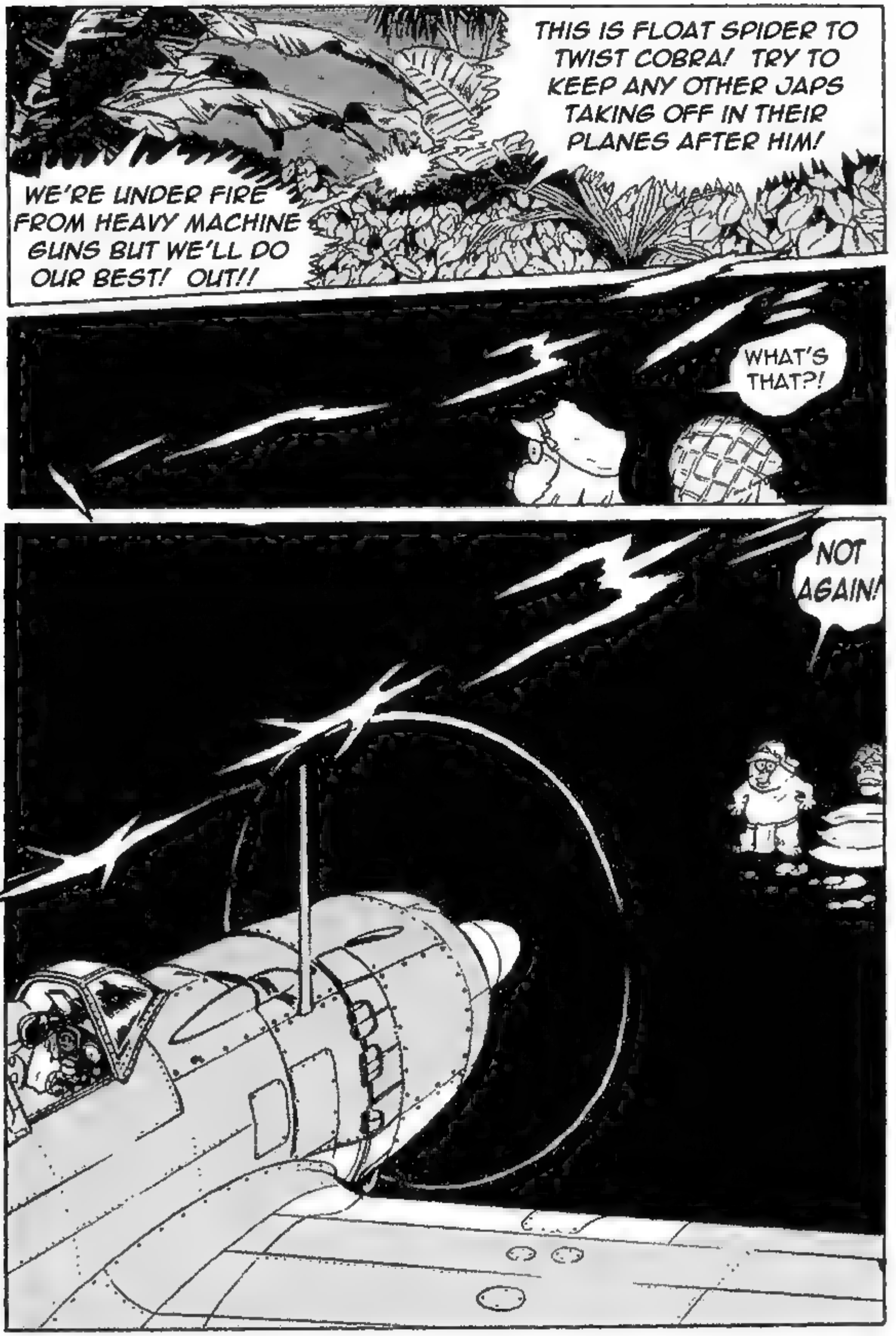
SHOOT IT DOWN! SHOOT IT DOWN!! THAT'S NOT ONE OF OUR PILOTS IN THERE!!!


TO BE CONTINUED ...

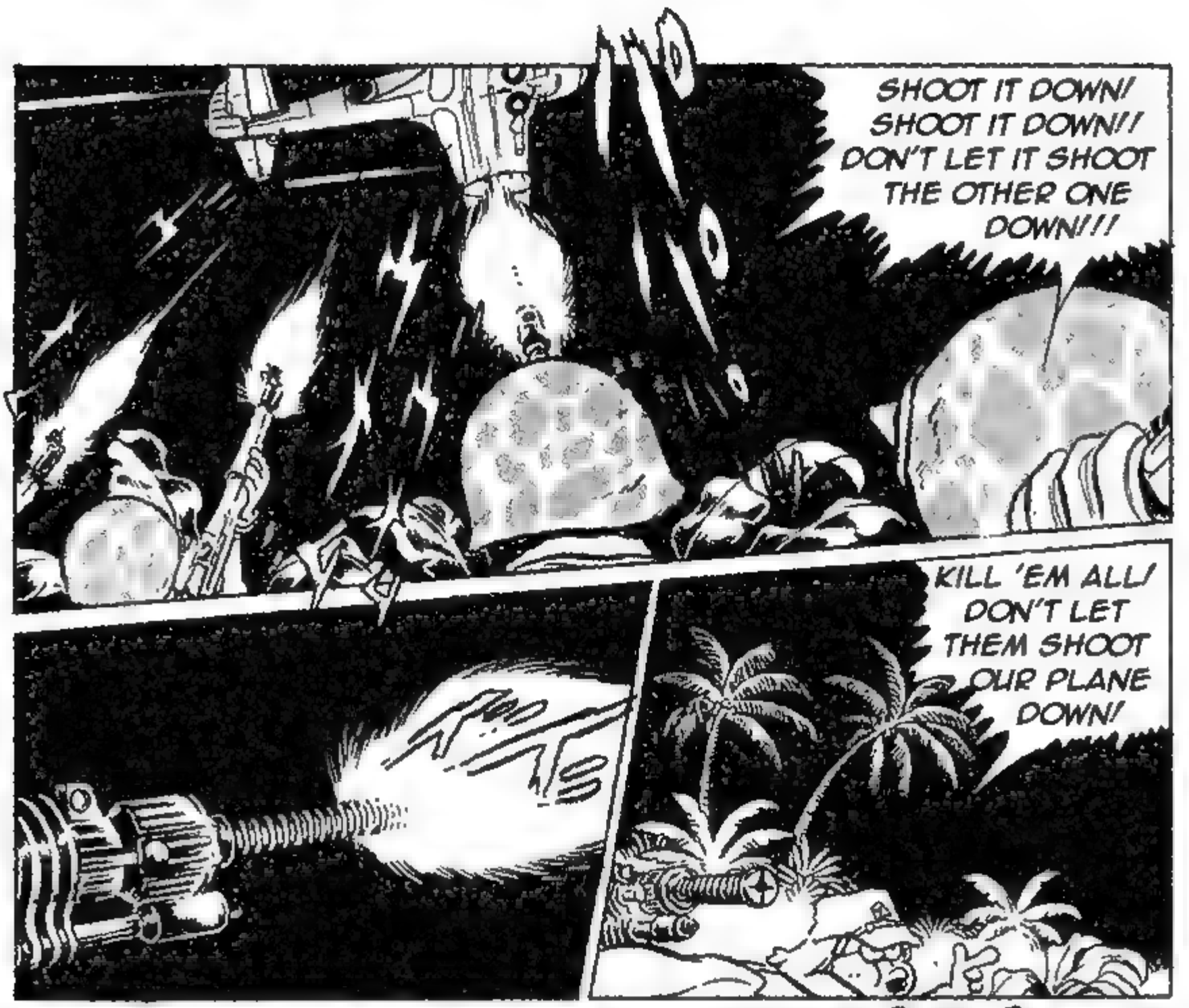
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)

THE NIGHT MAYFLY
(PART 2 OF 2)

TWIST COBRA TO FLOAT SPIDER! TWIST COBRA TO FLOAT SPIDER! LT. CLAIRE HAS APPARENTLY HIJACKED A JAP FIGHTER AND TAKEN OFF! I REPEAT ... !!


THIS IS FLOAT SPIDER TO TWIST COBRA! TRY TO KEEP ANY OTHER JAPS TAKING OFF IN THEIR PLANES AFTER HIM!
WE'RE UNDER FIRE FROM HEAVY MACHINE GUNS BUT WE'LL DO OUR BEST! OUT!!
WHAT'S THAT?!
NOT AGAIN!

THAT'S ONE OF OURS! DON'T SHOOT AT IT! HE'S GOING AFTER THE PLANE THAT GOT STOLEN!


SHOOT IT DOWN! SHOOT IT DOWN!! DON'T LET IT SHOOT THE OTHER ONE DOWN!!!
KILL 'EM ALL! DON'T LET THEM SHOOT OUR PLANE DOWN!
WOW ...

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)

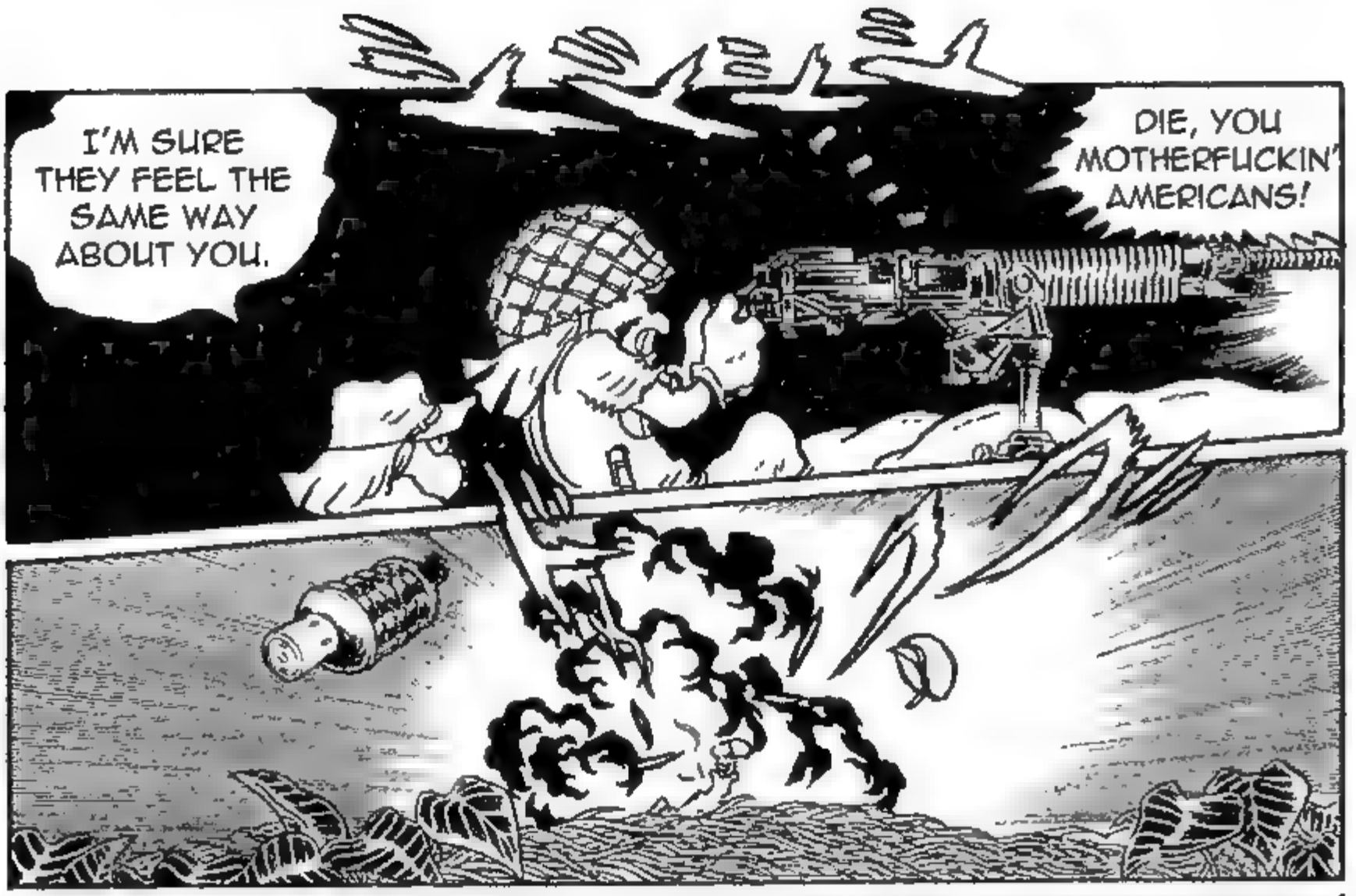
I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE CAUGHT IN THAT.

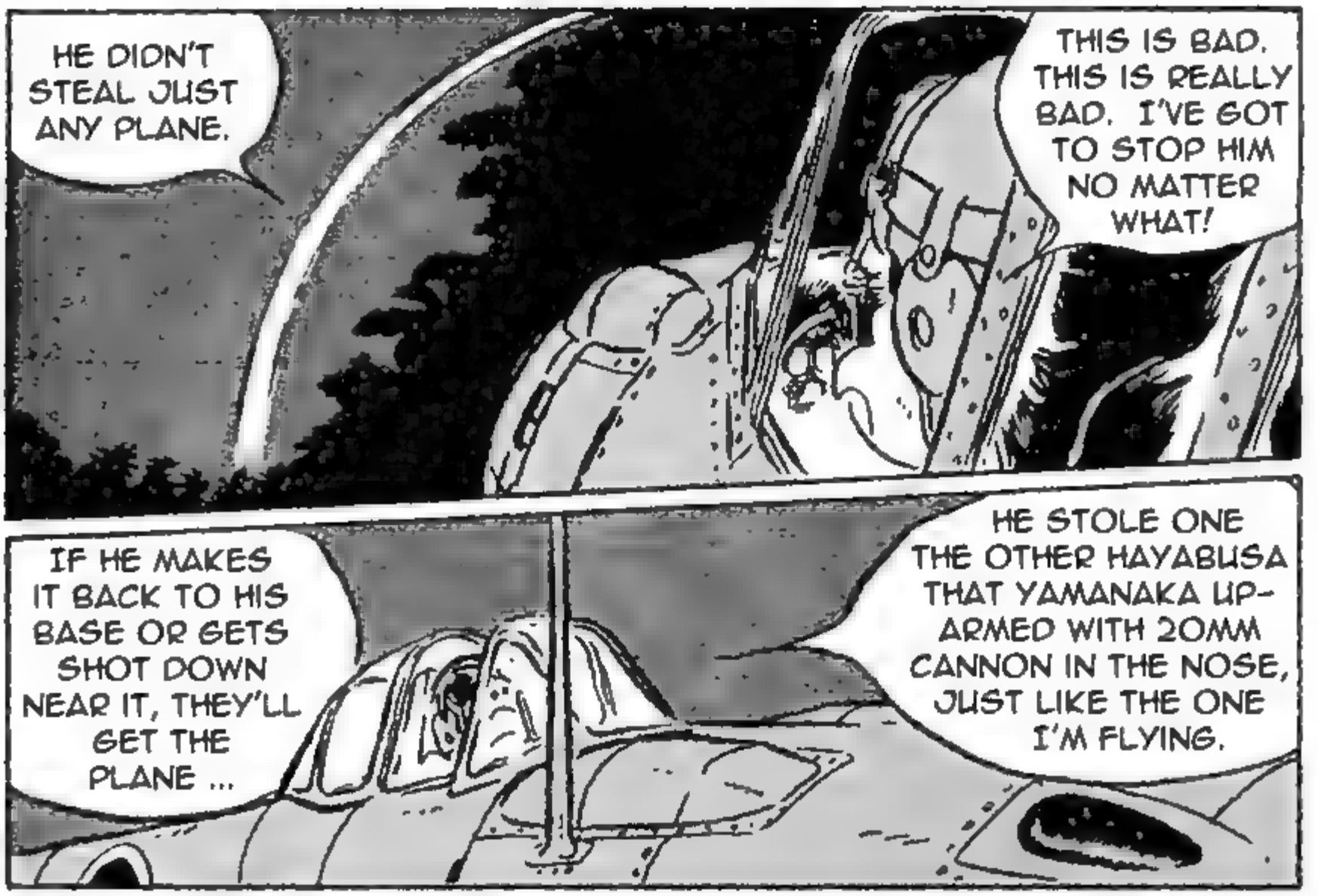
WOULD YOU LOOK AT ALL OF THAT GUNFIRE?

HEY! THE AMERICANS ARE STARTING TO FIRE ON EACH OTHER!

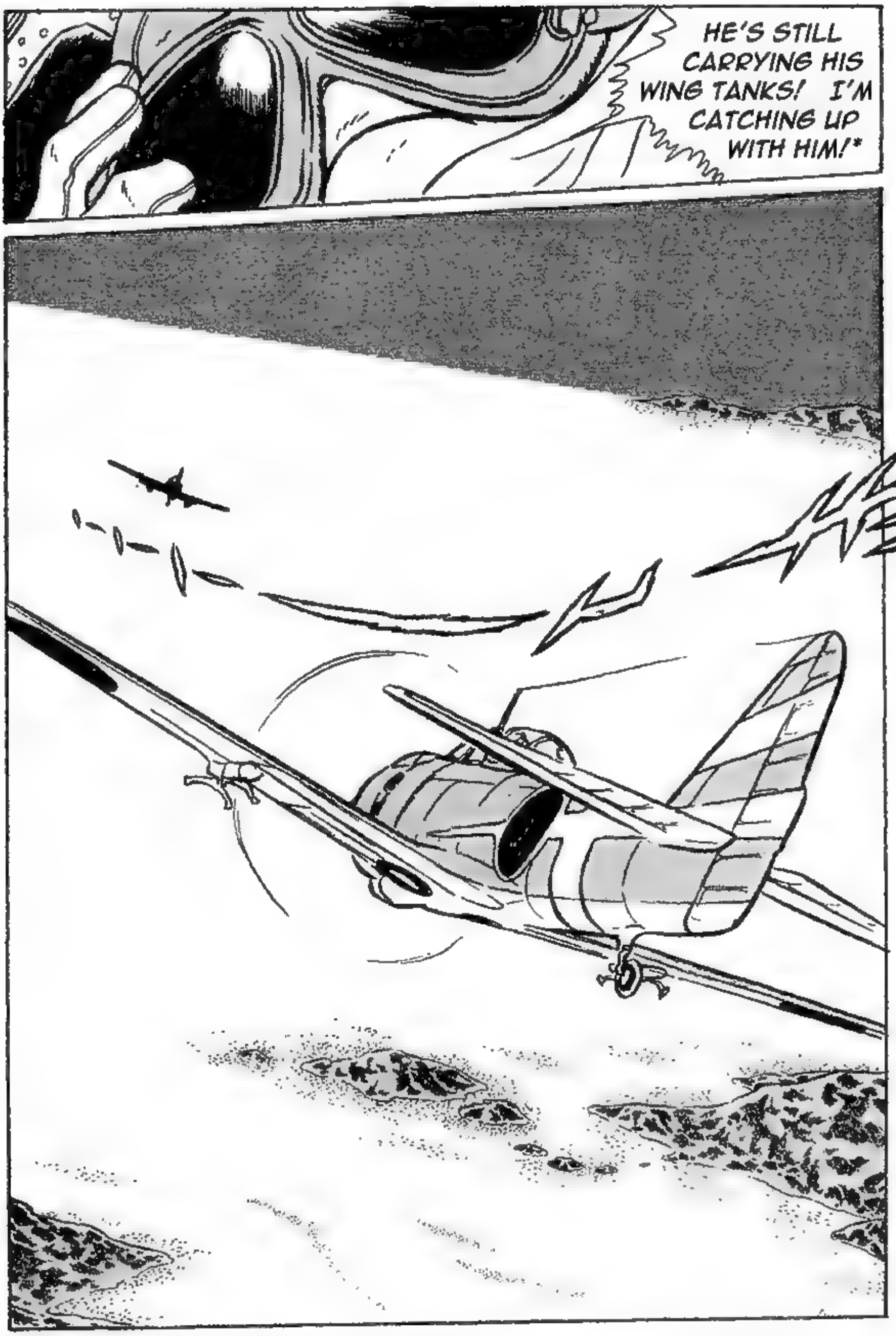
KNOCK THAT OFF! WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE!! WE CAN'T TELL WHO IS WHO OUT HERE!

WE NEED TO FORM A HEDGEHOG!

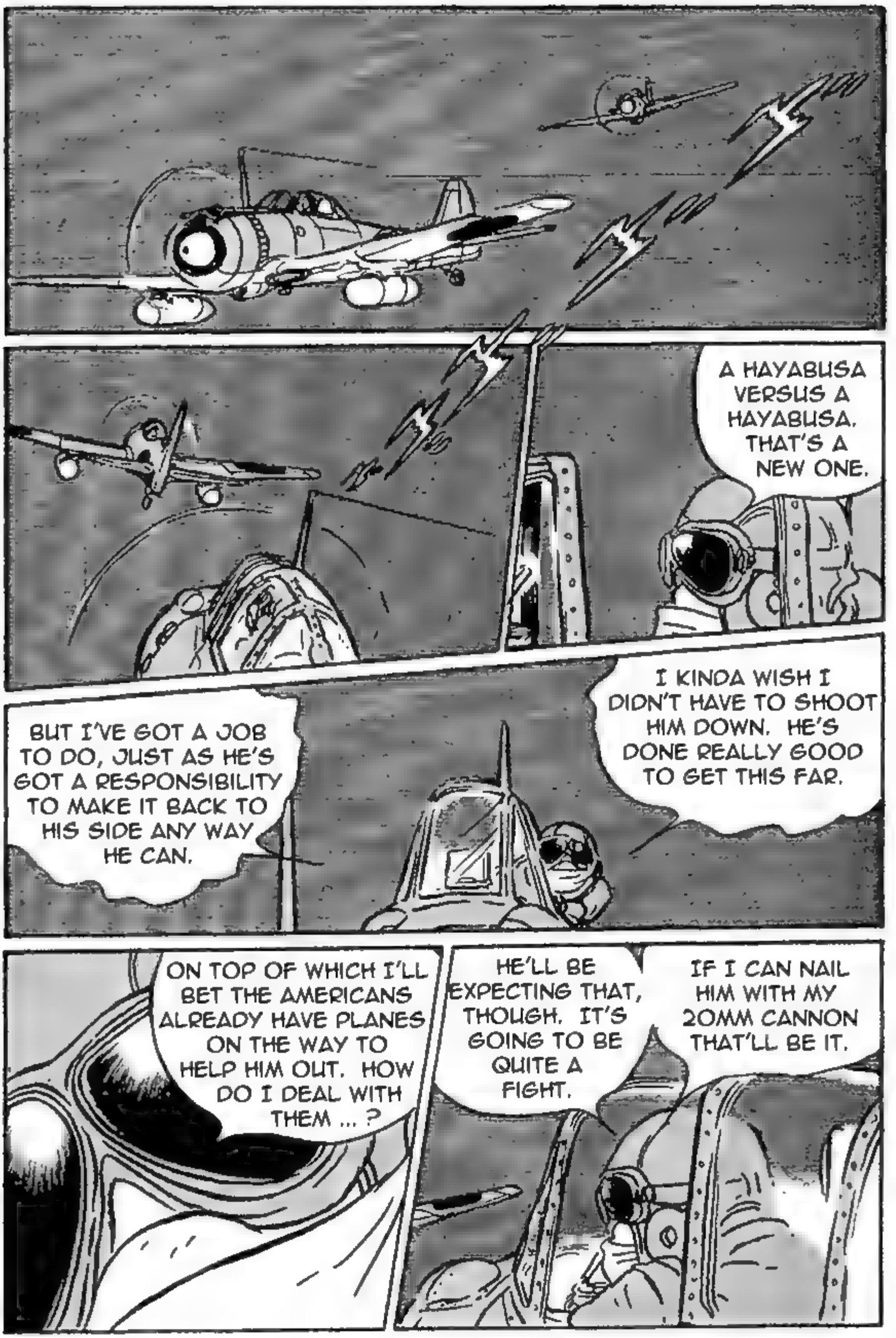

I'M SURE THEY FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT YOU.
DIE, YOU MOTHERFUCKIN' AMERICANS!


HE DIDN'T STEAL JUST ANY PLANE.
THIS IS BAD. THIS IS REALLY BAD. I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM NO MATTER WHAT!
IF HE MAKES IT BACK TO HIS BASE OR GETS SHOT DOWN NEAR IT, THEY'LL GET THE PLANE ...
HE STOLE ONE THE OTHER HAYABUSA THAT YAMANAKA UP-ARMED WITH 20MM CANNON IN THE NOSE, JUST LIKE THE ONE I'M FLYING.
... AND THEY'LL FIND OUT ABOUT YAMANAKA'S MOD.
I'VE GOT TO SHOOT HIM DOWN OVER THE DEEP OCEAN. THAT WAY THE PLANE WILL SINK AND THERE'S NO WAY THAT THE AMERICANS CAN RECOVER IT. I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO THIS!

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)



(*) PERHAPS HE HASN'T YET FIGURED OUT WHERE THE RIGHT SWITCH IS, GIVEN THAT EVERYTHING INSIDE HIS COCKPIT HAS JAPANESE LABELS.

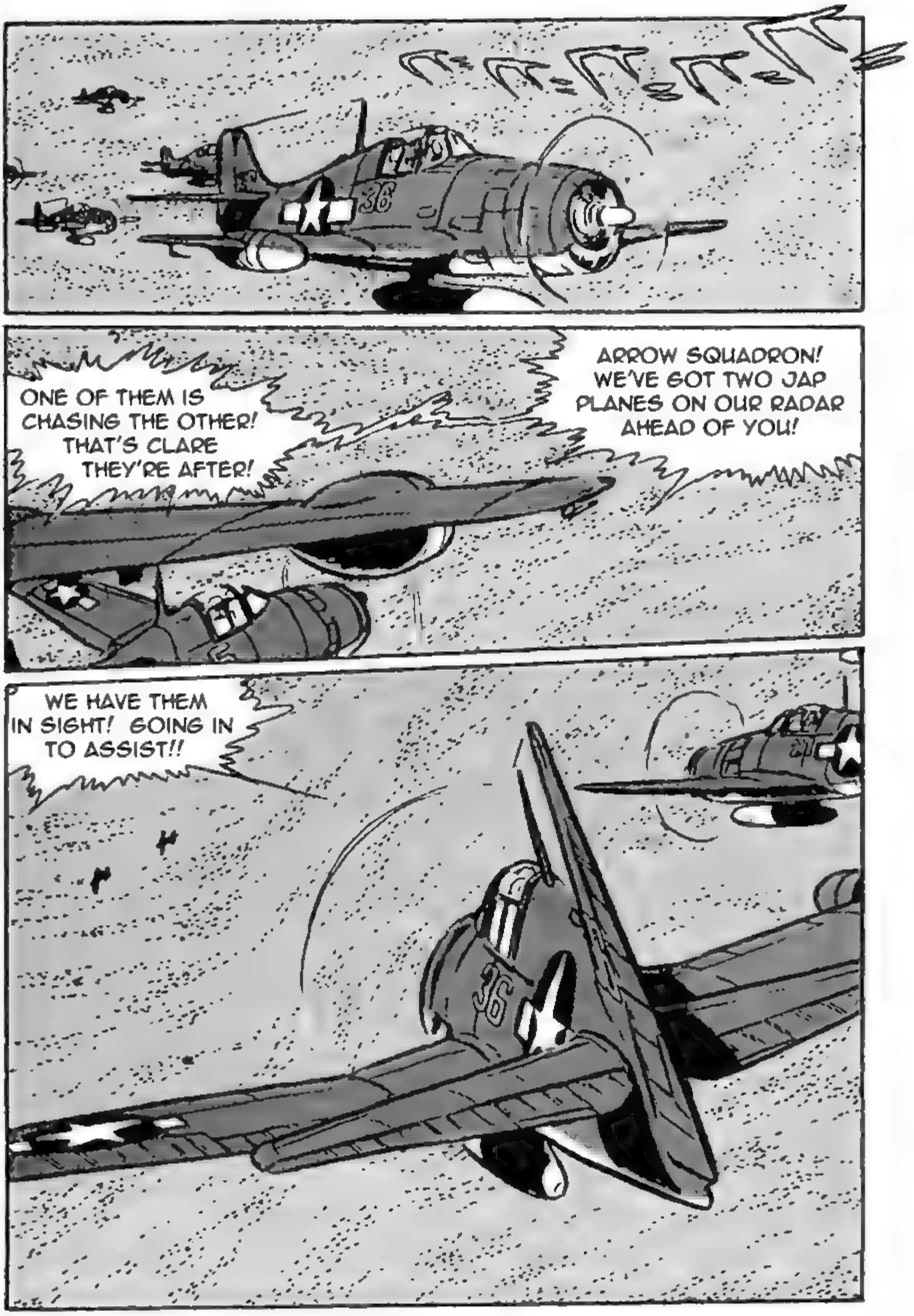

A HAYABUSA VERSUS A HAYABUSA. THAT'S A NEW ONE.
I KINDA WISH I DIDN'T HAVE TO SHOOT HIM DOWN. HE'S DONE REALLY GOOD TO GET THIS FAR.
BUT I'VE GOT A JOB TO DO, JUST AS HE'S GOT A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE IT BACK TO HIS SIDE ANY WAY HE CAN.
ON TOP OF WHICH I'LL BET THE AMERICANS ALREADY HAVE PLANES ON THE WAY TO HELP HIM OUT. HOW DO I DEAL WITH THEM ... ?
HE'LL BE EXPECTING THAT, THOUGH. IT'S GOING TO BE QUITE A FIGHT.
IF I CAN NAIL HIM WITH MY 20MM CANNON THAT'LL BE IT.

LET'S FINISH THIS!

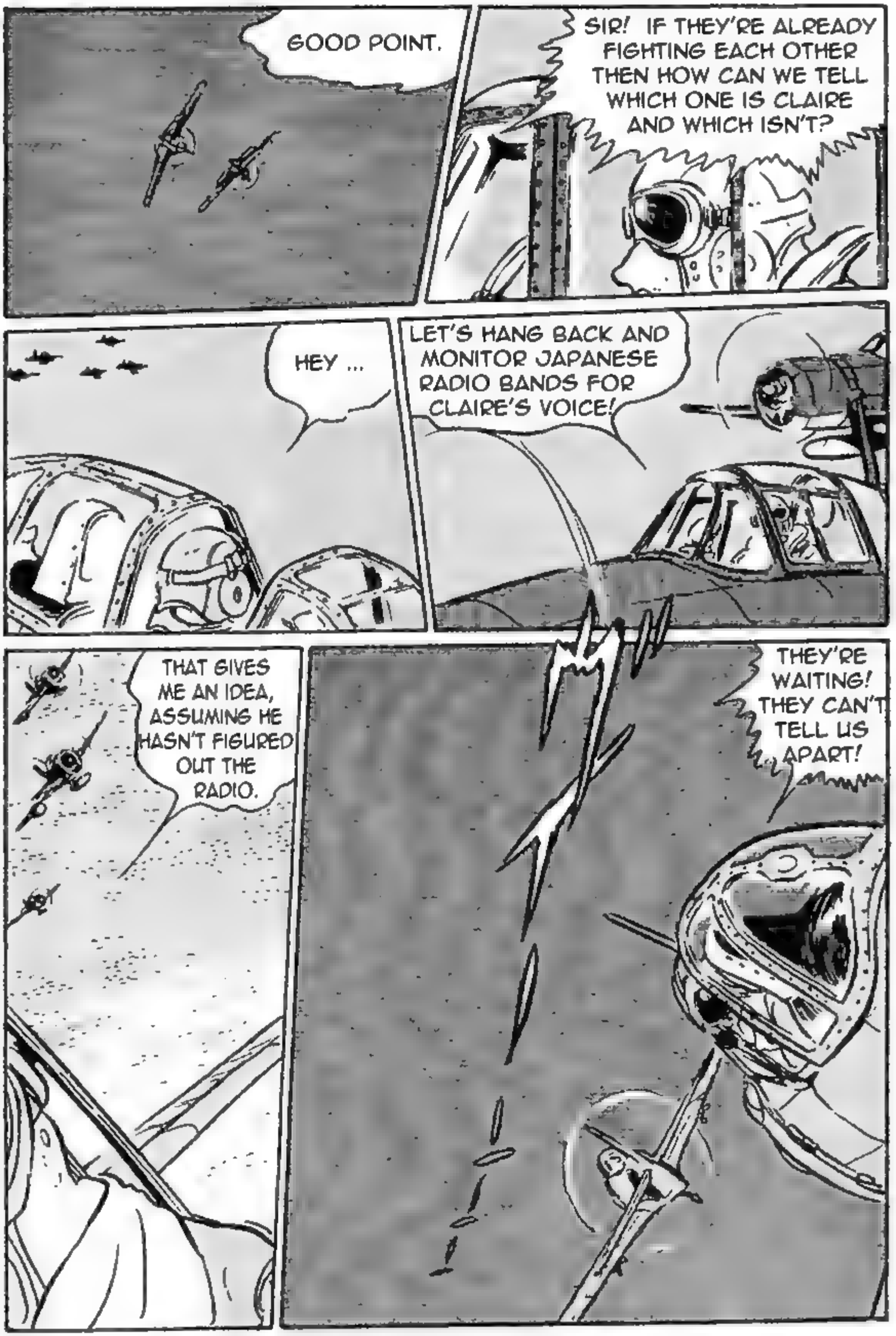
GOOD! HE'S WELL WITHIN MY 20 MM CANNON RANGE!

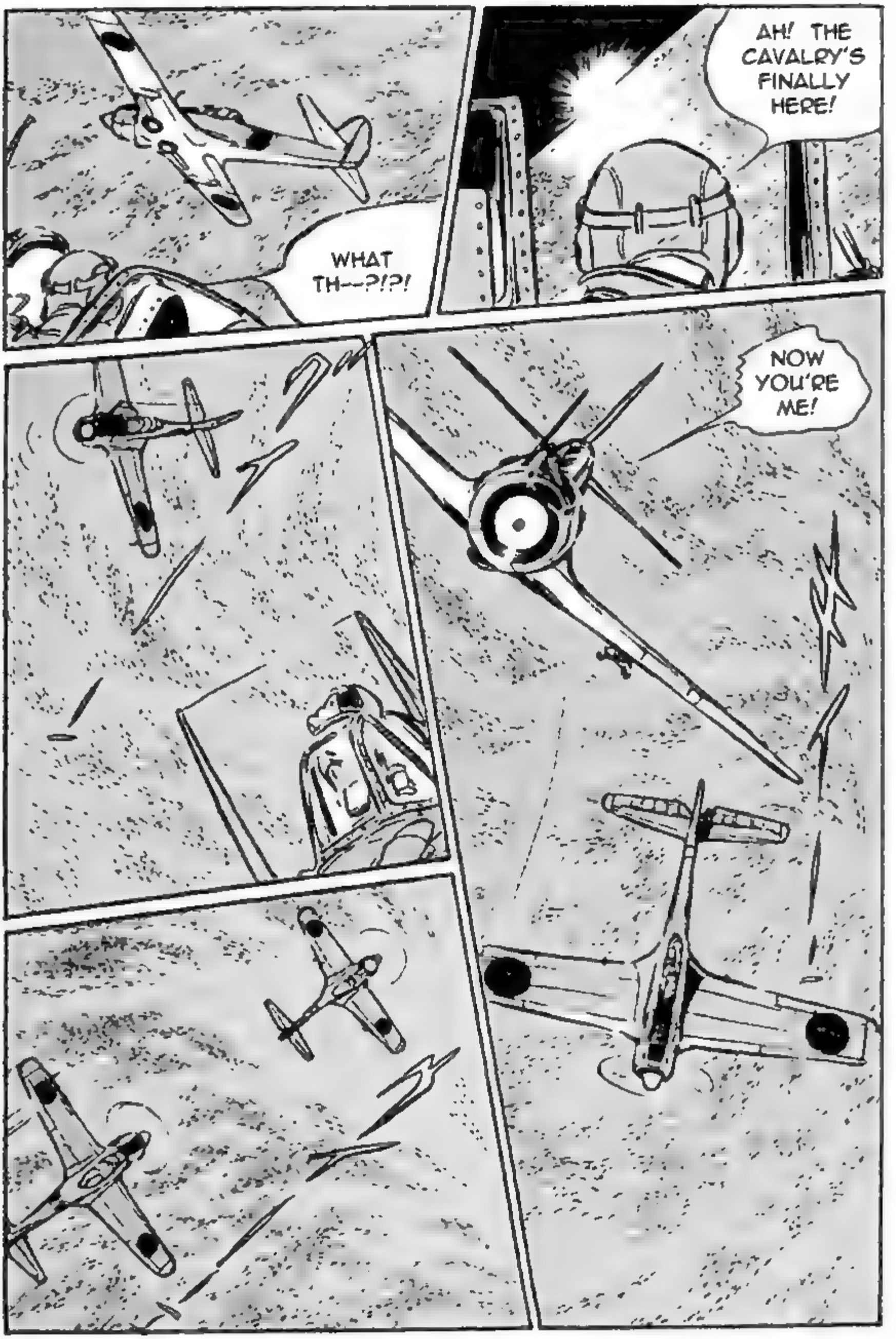
BETTER THINK OF SOMETHING ELSE, FAST!

SHIT! HE FIGURED OUT HOW TO DROP HIS AUXILIARY FUEL TANKS! NOW WE'RE EVENLY MATCHED!

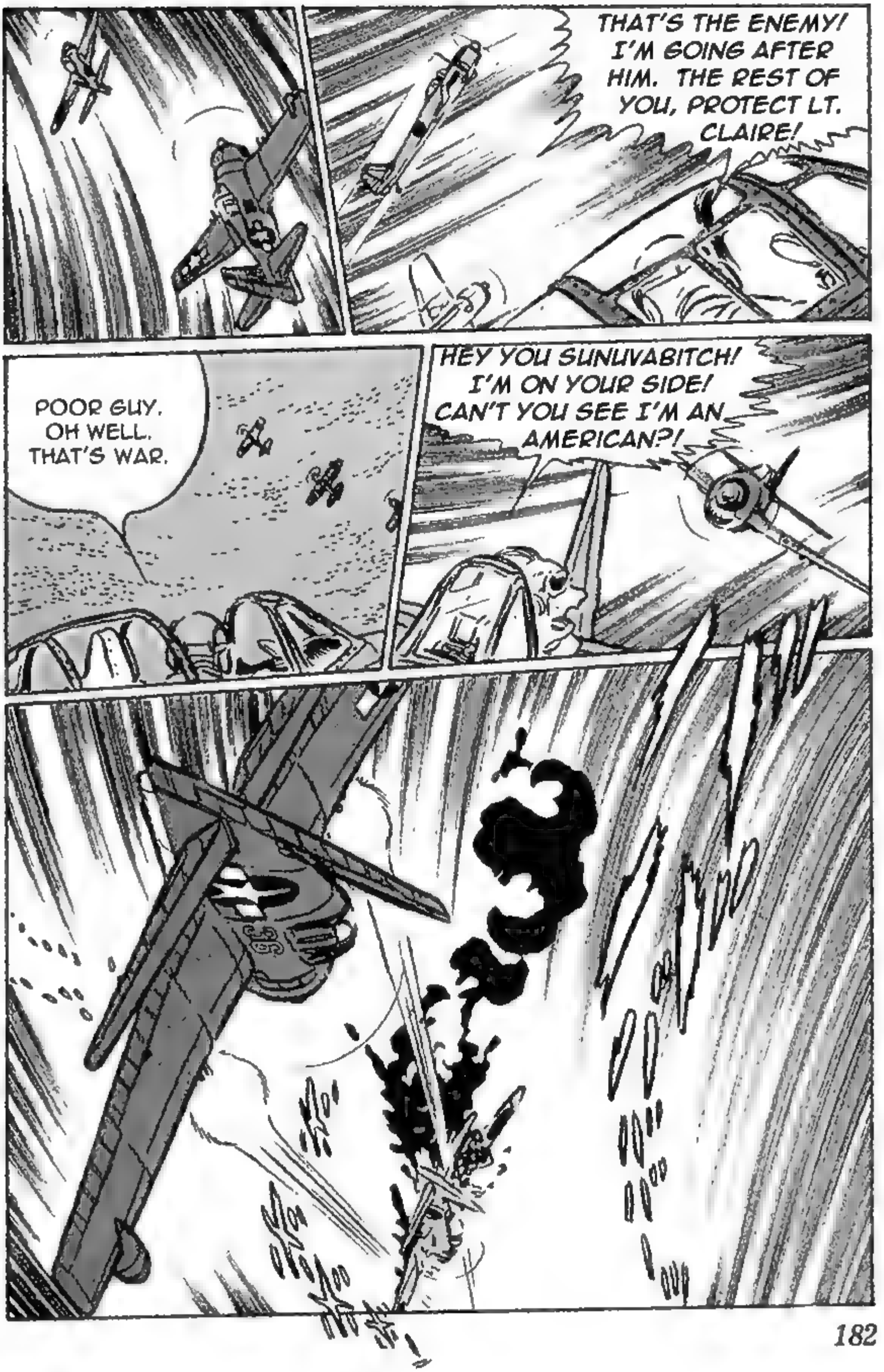

ONE OF THEM IS CHASING THE OTHER! THAT'S CLARE THEY'RE AFTER!
ARROW SQUADRON! WE'VE GOT TWO JAP PLANES ON OUR RADAR AHEAD OF YOU!
WE HAVE THEM IN SIGHT! GOING IN TO ASSIST!!

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)

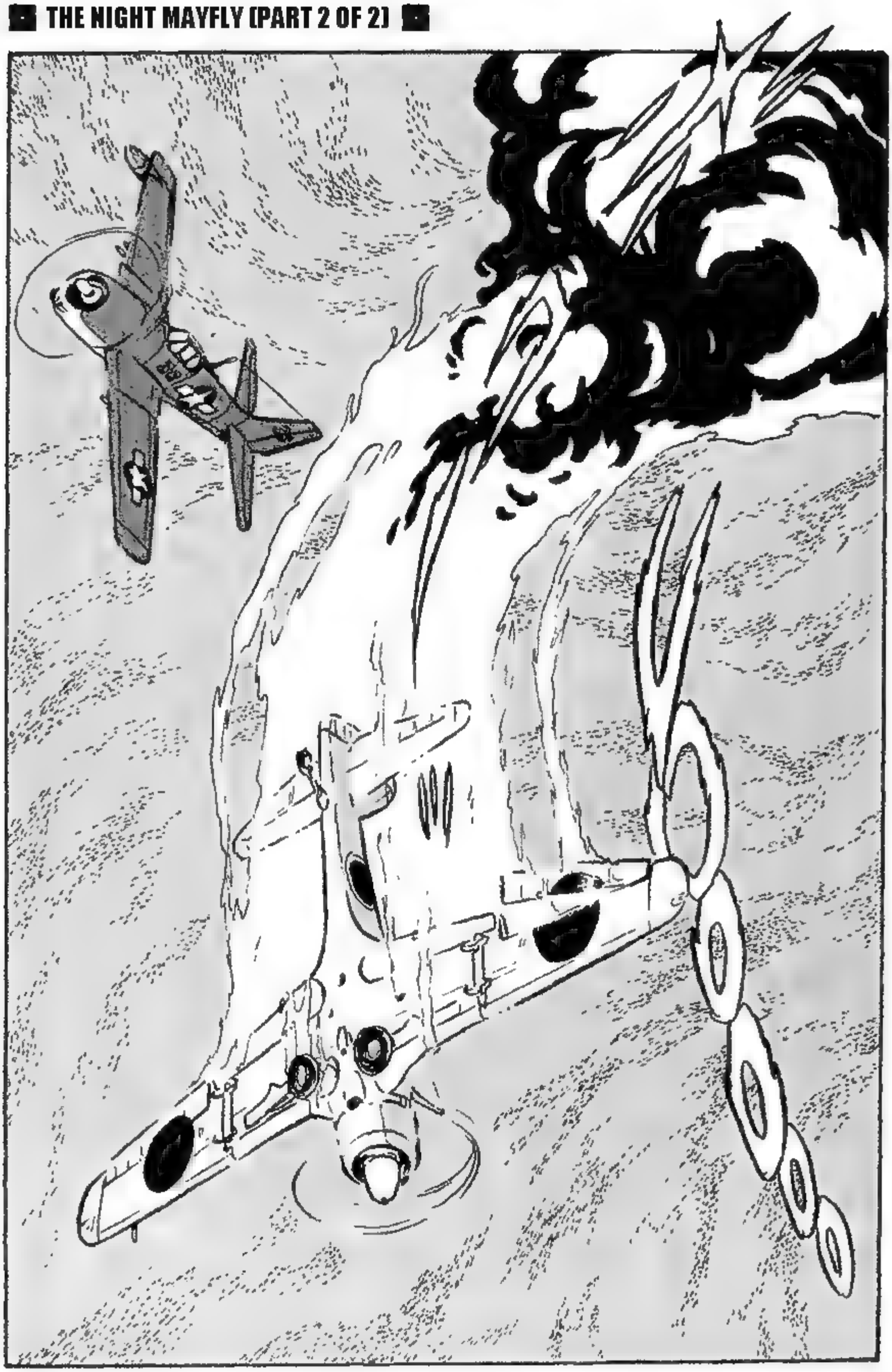

GOOD POINT.
SIR! IF THEY'RE ALREADY FIGHTING EACH OTHER THEN HOW CAN WE TELL WHICH ONE IS CLAIRE AND WHICH ISN'T?
HEY ...
LET'S HANG BACK AND MONITOR JAPANESE RADIO BANDS FOR CLAIRE'S VOICE!
THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA, ASSUMING HE HASN'T FIGURED OUT THE RADIO.
THEY'RE WAITING! THEY CAN'T TELL US APART!


WHAT TH—?!?!
AH! THE CAVALRY'S FINALLY HERE!
NOW YOU'RE ME!

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)


THAT'S THE ENEMY! I'M GOING AFTER HIM. THE REST OF YOU, PROTECT LT. CLAIRE!
POOR GUY. OH WELL. THAT'S WAR.
HEY YOU SUNUVABITCH! I'M ON YOUR SIDE! CAN'T YOU SEE I'M AN AMERICAN?!

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)



THIS IS ARROW LEADER TO ALL ARROWS IN THE QUIVER. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. LET'S ESCORT OUR LOST PILOT BACK HOME.

UH-OH. WHAT NOW?

I FEEL LIKE A CREEP NOW.

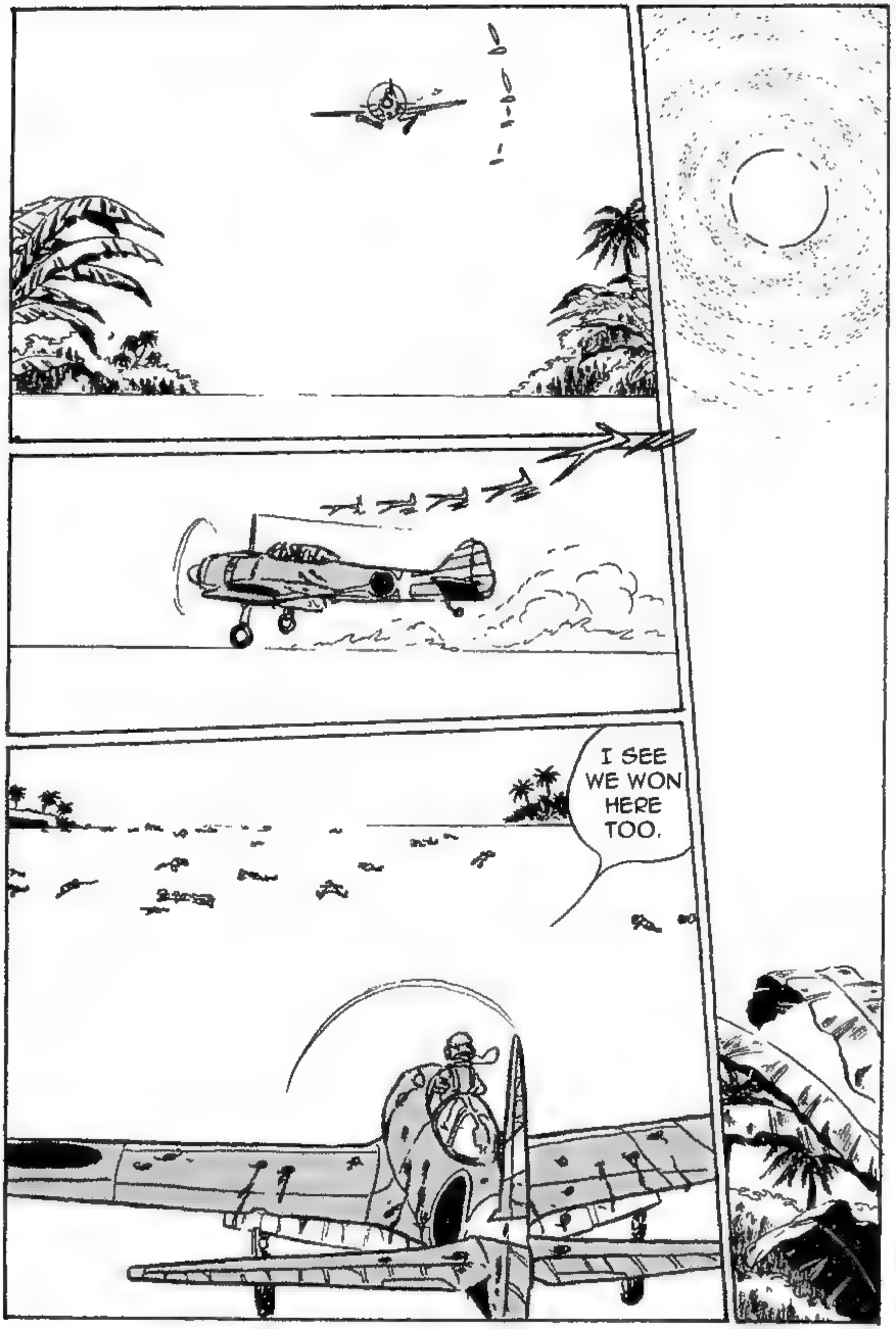
SO YOU THINK I'M WHOEVER IT WAS, EH? I'M NOT HIM!

SON OF A BITCH!

ARROW LEADER!!!

THE BOSS SHOT DOWN THE WRONG PLANE!

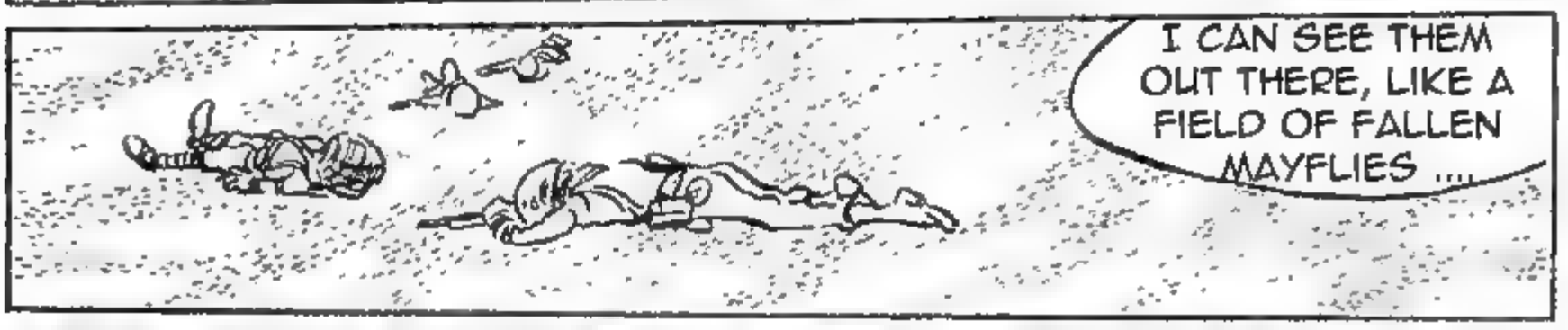
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)

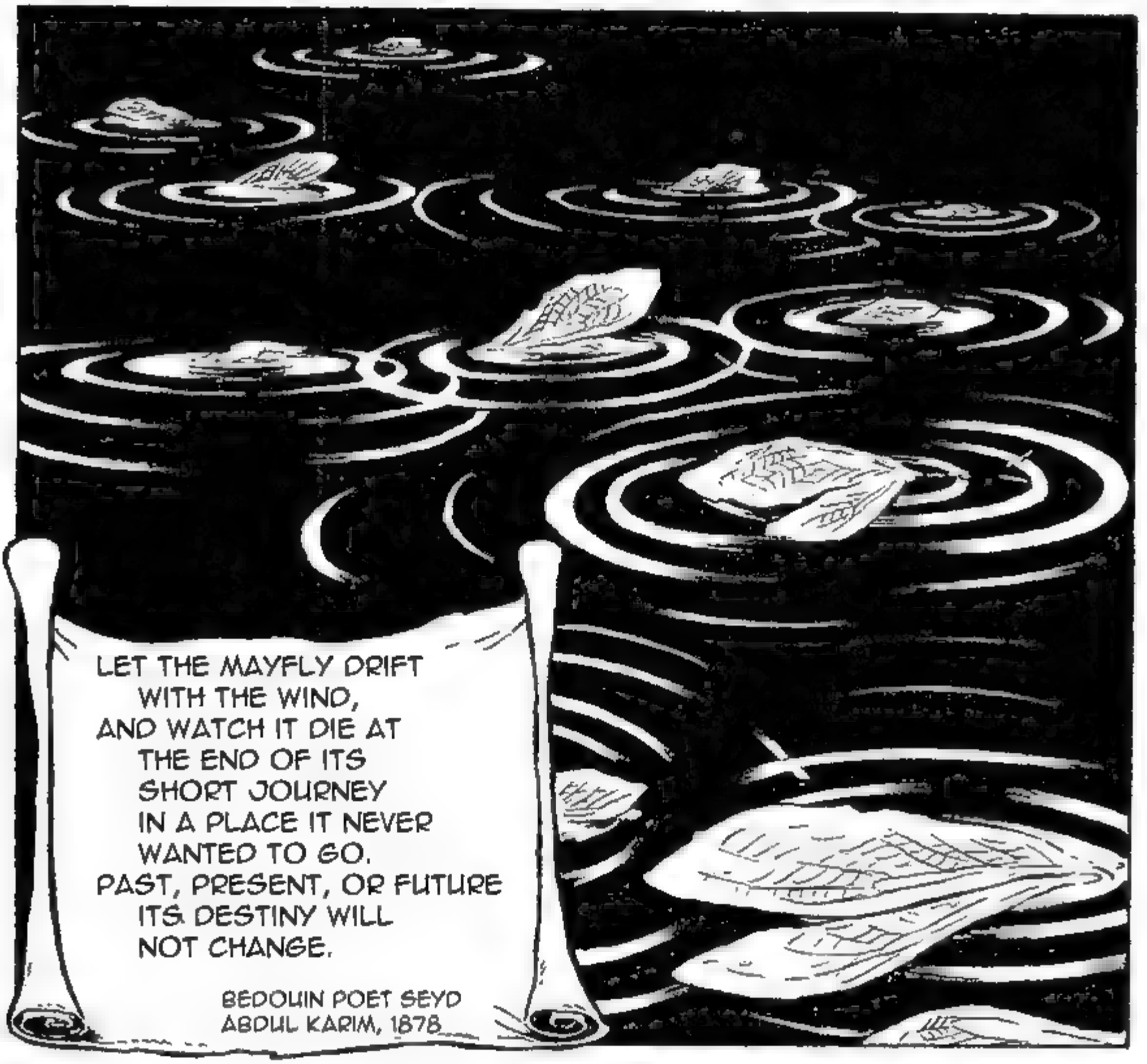

I SEE WE WON HERE TOO.

THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)

LOOKS LIKE WE DID IT.
I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MANY WE KILLED.
IT'S A SHAME IN A WAY. THEY TRIED SO HARD, BUT WE WERE TOO MUCH FOR THEM.
THEY REMIND ME OF NIGHT MAYFLIES.
YOU KNOW? HOW SWARMS OF THEM GO AFTER ANY KIND OF LIGHT, EVEN FIRE, EVEN THOUGH IT KILLS THEM, AND IN THE MORNING YOU'VE GOT PILES OF THEM EVERYWHERE?
ALL OF THEM WERE SHOT DOWN?! WHAT ABOUT THE MARINES?!?!
THEM TOO?!?! DAMMIT ALL!!!
SO MANY MEN LOST FOR ONE DOWNED PILOT ... AND WE DIDN'T EVEN GET HIM ....

I'LL ALSO HELP WITH THE LETTERS FOR ALL OF THE FALLEN MARINES.
HE'S A SUB COMMANDER IN THE NORTH PACIFIC. HE'LL PROBABLY TAKE OUT HIS LOSS ON EVERY JAP TRANSPORT HE CAN FIND FROM NOW ON.
I'LL HAVE LT. CLAIRE'S FATHER NOTIFIED AT ONCE. HE NEEDS TO KNOW.





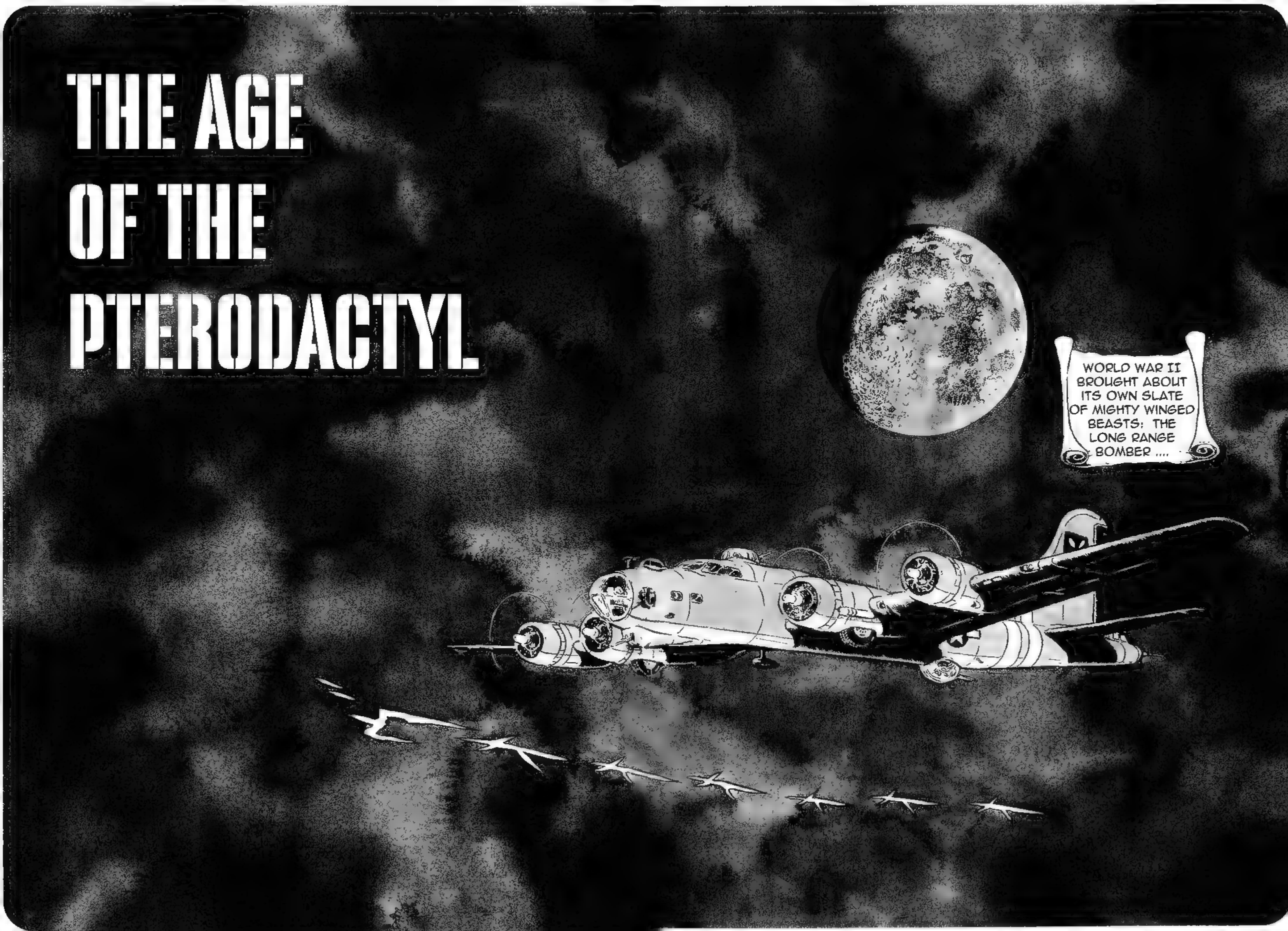
(Published in Big Comic Original, January 20th and February 5th, 1978 issues)

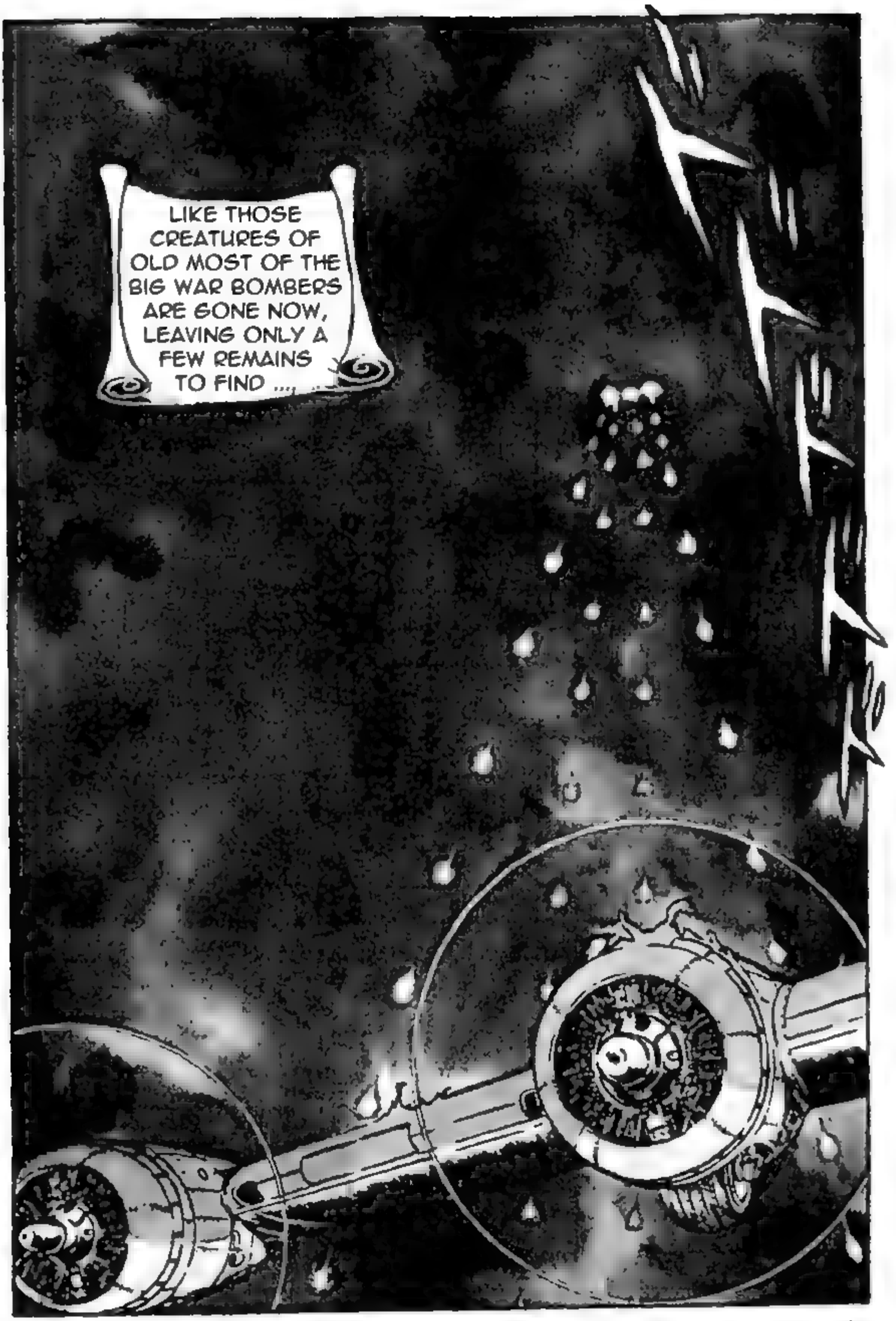
THE NIGHT MAYFLY (PART 2 OF 2)

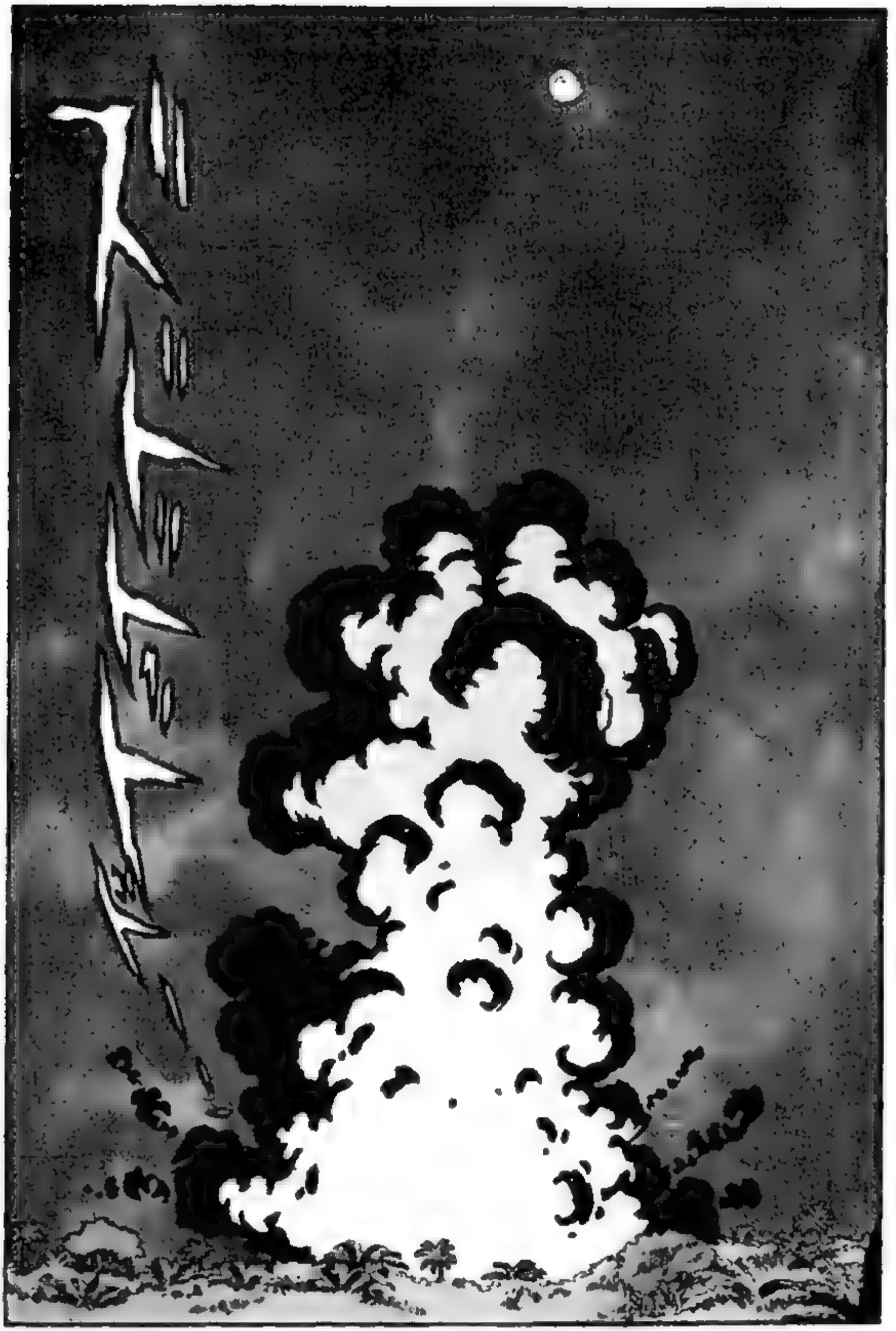
THE AGE OF THE PTERODACTYL

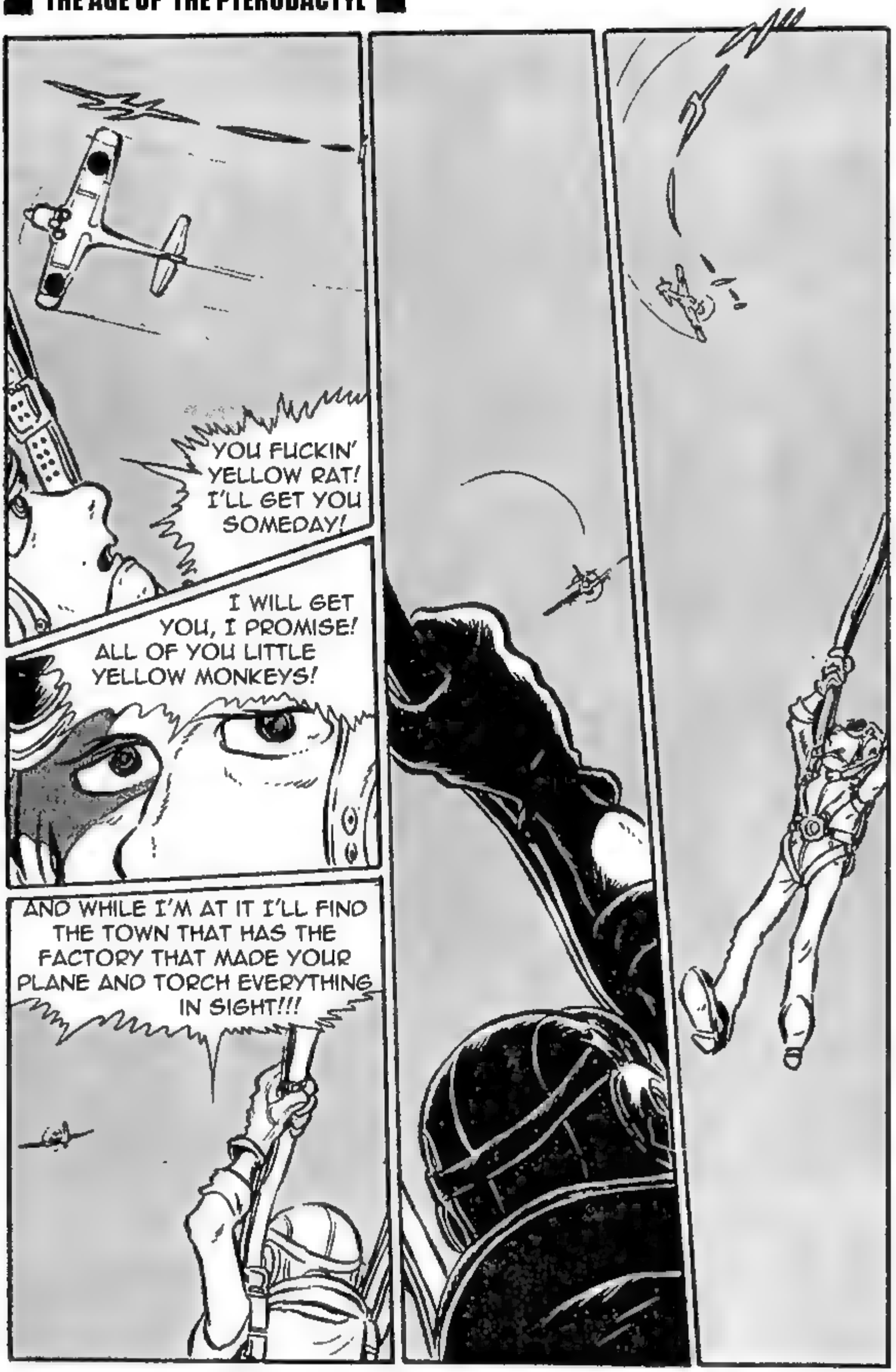
PTERODACTYLS WERE THE MOST POWERFUL WINGED CREATURES OF THEIR TIME. THEY CAME IN ALL SIZES, BUT IT'S THE BIG ONES THAT MOST PEOPLE THESE DAYS THINK OF

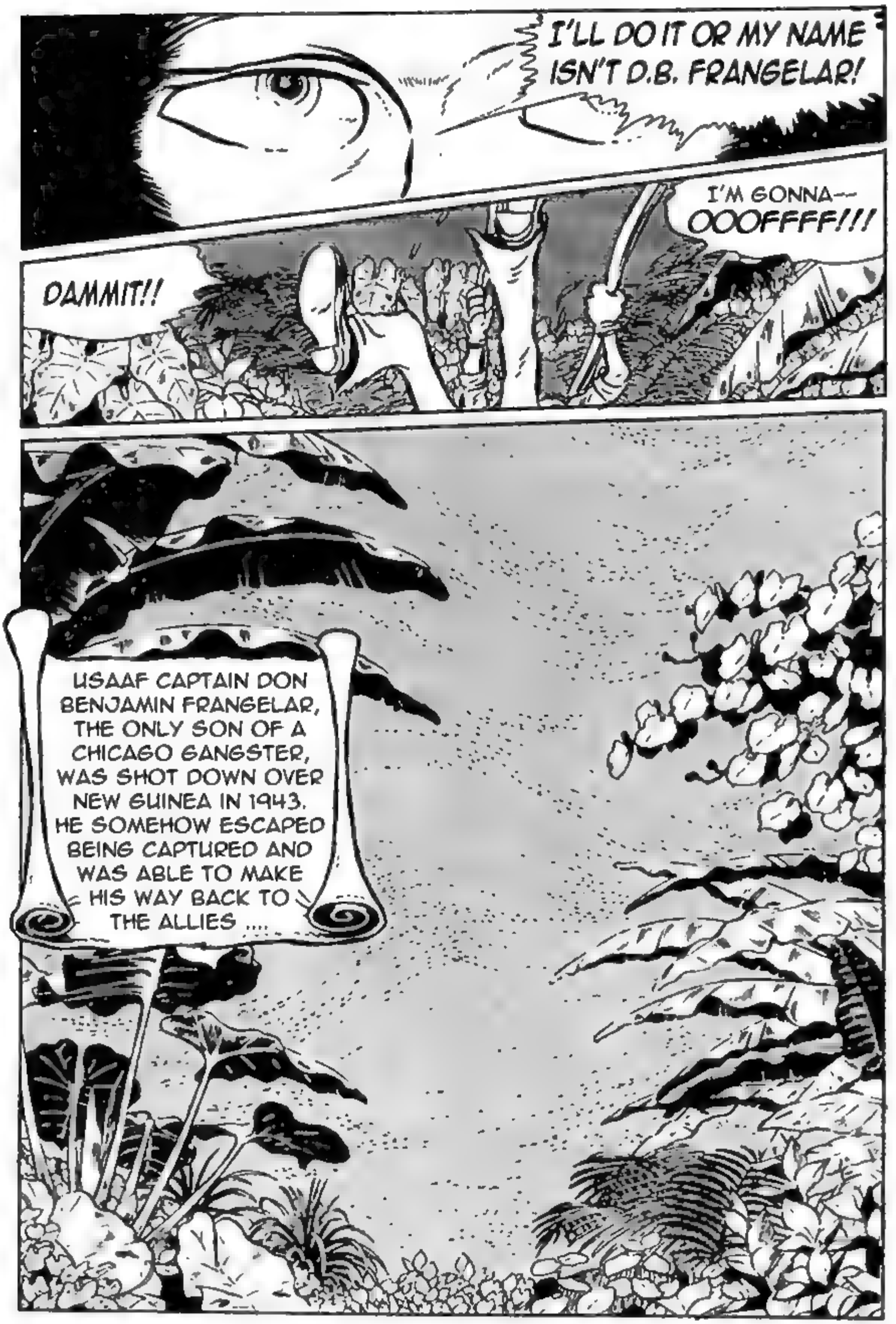
THE AGE OF THE PTERODACTYL

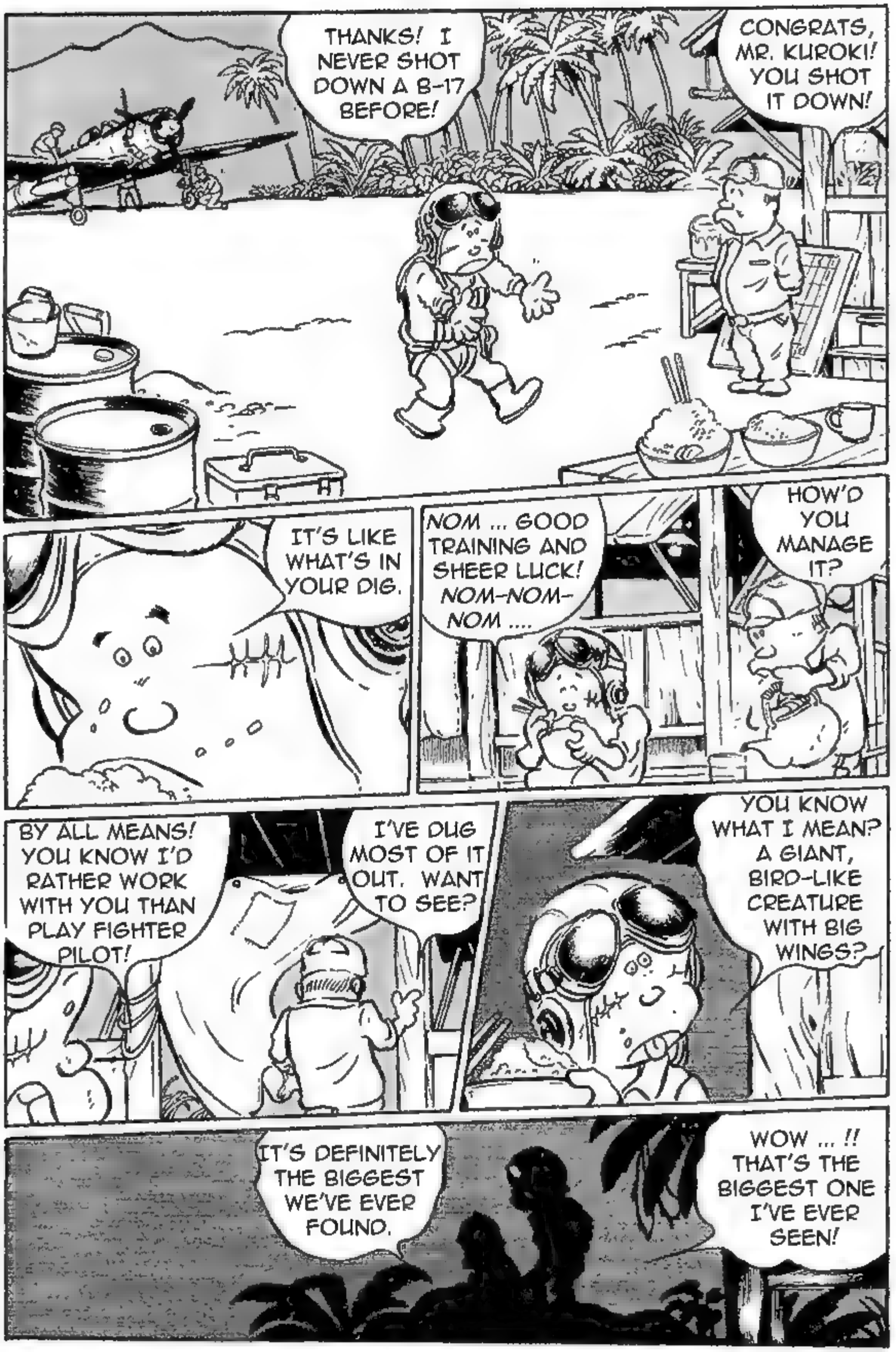


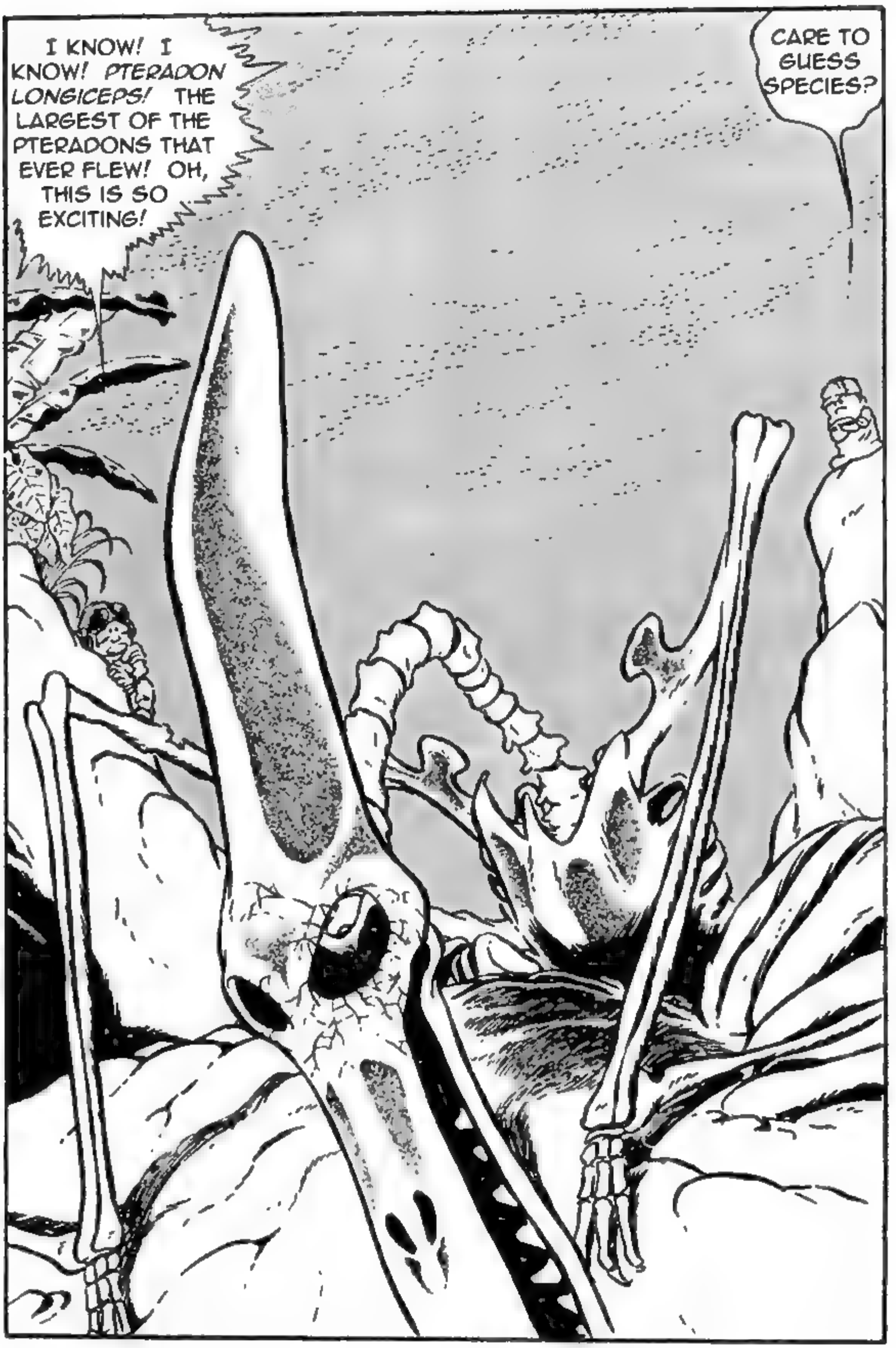

LIKE THOSE CREATURES OF OLD MOST OF THE BIG WAR BOMBERS ARE GONE NOW, LEAVING ONLY A FEW REMAINS TO FIND ...,




YOU FUCKIN' YELLOW RAT! I'LL GET YOU SOMEDAY!
I WILL GET YOU, I PROMISE! ALL OF YOU LITTLE YELLOW MONKEYS!
AND WHILE I'M AT IT I'LL FIND THE TOWN THAT HAS THE FACTORY THAT MADE YOUR PLANE AND TORCH EVERYTHING IN SIGHT!!!


I'LL DO IT OR MY NAME ISN'T D.B. FRANGELAR!
I'M GONNA— OOOFFFF!!!
DAMMIT!!
USAAF CAPTAIN DON BENJAMIN FRANGELAR, THE ONLY SON OF A CHICAGO GANGSTER, WAS SHOT DOWN OVER NEW GUINEA IN 1943. HE SOMEHOW ESCAPED BEING CAPTURED AND WAS ABLE TO MAKE HIS WAY BACK TO THE ALLIES ....


THANKS! I NEVER SHOT DOWN A B-17 BEFORE!
CONGRATS, MR. KUROKI! YOU SHOT IT DOWN!
IT'S LIKE WHAT'S IN YOUR DIG.
NOM ... GOOD TRAINING AND SHEER LUCK! NOM-NOM-NOM ....
HOW'D YOU MANAGE IT?
BY ALL MEANS! YOU KNOW I'D RATHER WORK WITH YOU THAN PLAY FIGHTER PILOT!
I'VE DUG MOST OF IT OUT. WANT TO SEE?
YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN? A GIANT, BIRD-LIKE CREATURE WITH BIG WINGS?
IT'S DEFINITELY THE BIGGEST WE'VE EVER FOUND.
WOW ... !! THAT'S THE BIGGEST ONE I'VE EVER SEEN!


I KNOW! I KNOW! *PTERADON LONGICEPS!* THE LARGEST OF THE PTERADONS THAT EVER FLEW! OH, THIS IS SO EXCITING!
CARE TO GUESS SPECIES?

BINGO! LATE CRETACEOUS PERIOD. YOU DIDN'T FORGET YOUR STUDIES!

YOU KNOW, IT'S KIND OF IRONIC, DOCTOR. MOST PTERADON AND PTERODACTYL FOSSILS ARE FOUND IN NORTH AMERICA, AND THAT'S WHERE THAT B-17 WAS MADE.

OH, AND THE ARMY'S GOING TO LET YOU FLY ESCORT FOR IT.

REALLY?! OH, THIS IS TOO MUCH! THANK YOU, DOCTOR!

WE'RE ALREADY IN TOUCH WITH UENO PARK.* THEY'RE EAGER TO GET IT.

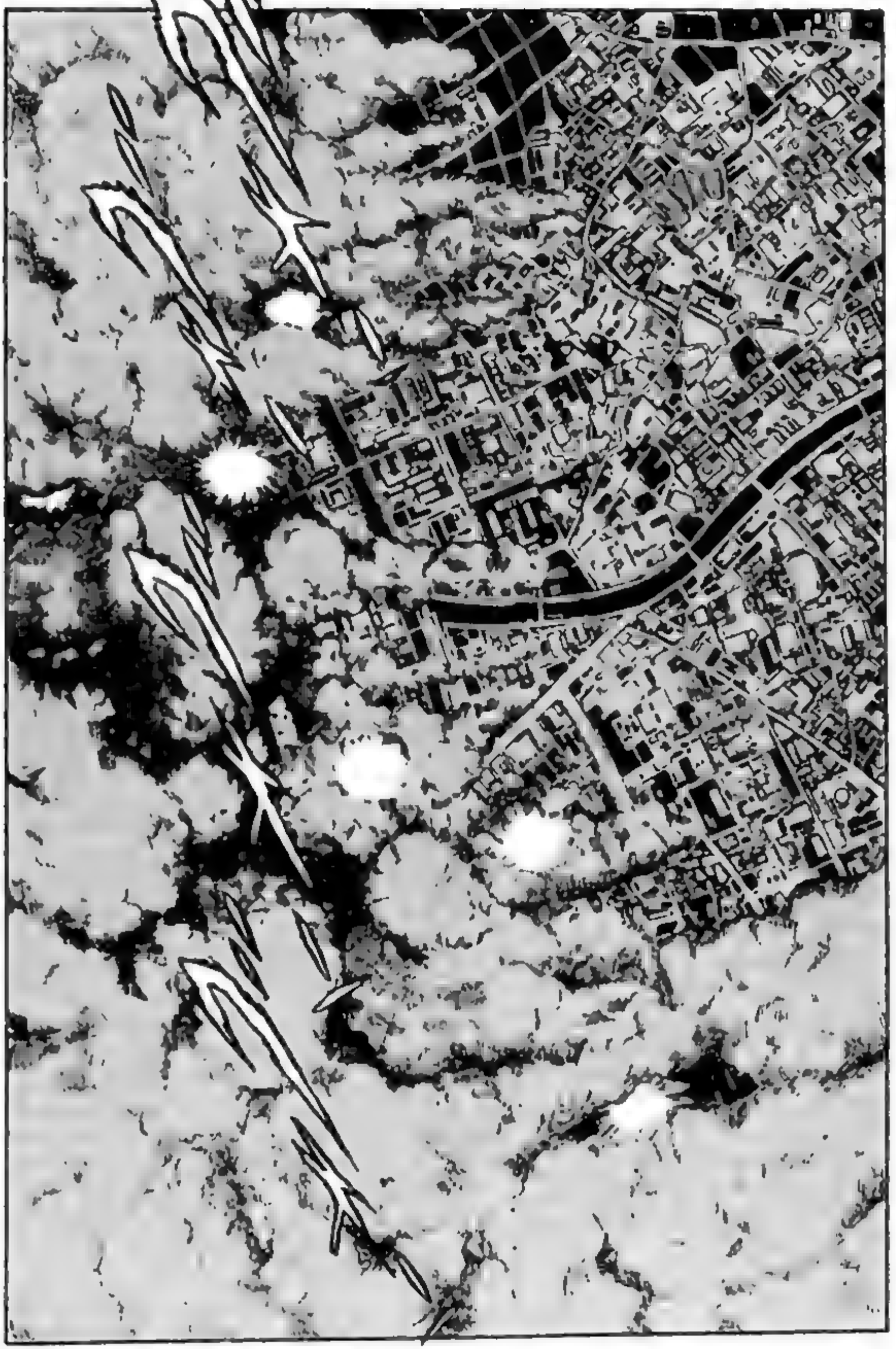
COOL! IT'LL BE SO NICE TO HAVE IT THERE WHERE EVERYONE CAN SEE IT!!

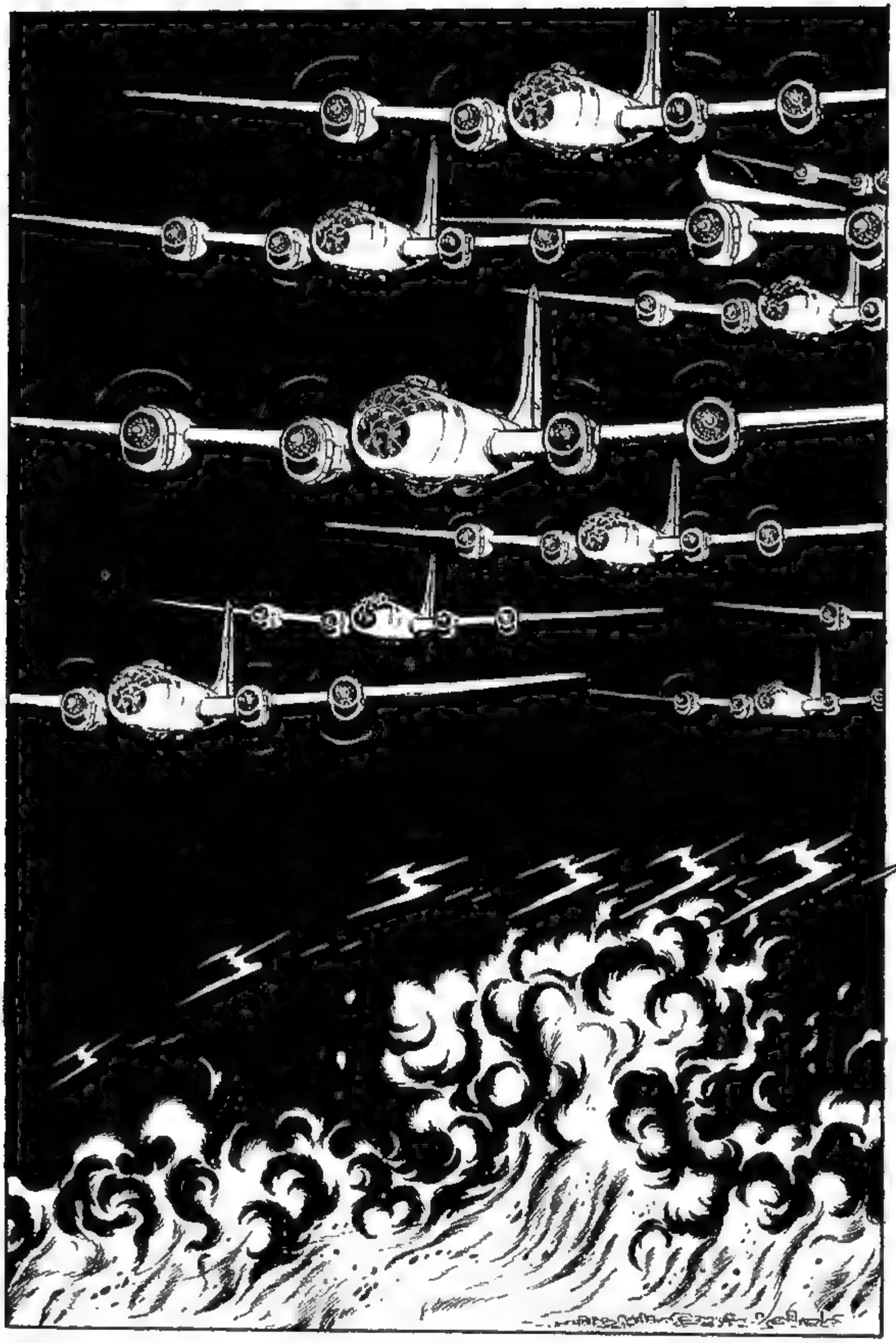
POOR FELLA. LOOKS LIKE HE FLEW INTO SOMETHING AND CRACKED HIS SKULL. OH, I HOPE YOU AND YOUR TEAM CAN GET THIS EXCAVATED AND BACK TO JAPAN BEFORE WE GET BOMBED!

WE'LL DO OUR BEST.

(*) *UENO PARK* - LOCATION OF THE TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE.

EARLY SPRING 1945
(TWO YEARS LATER ...)



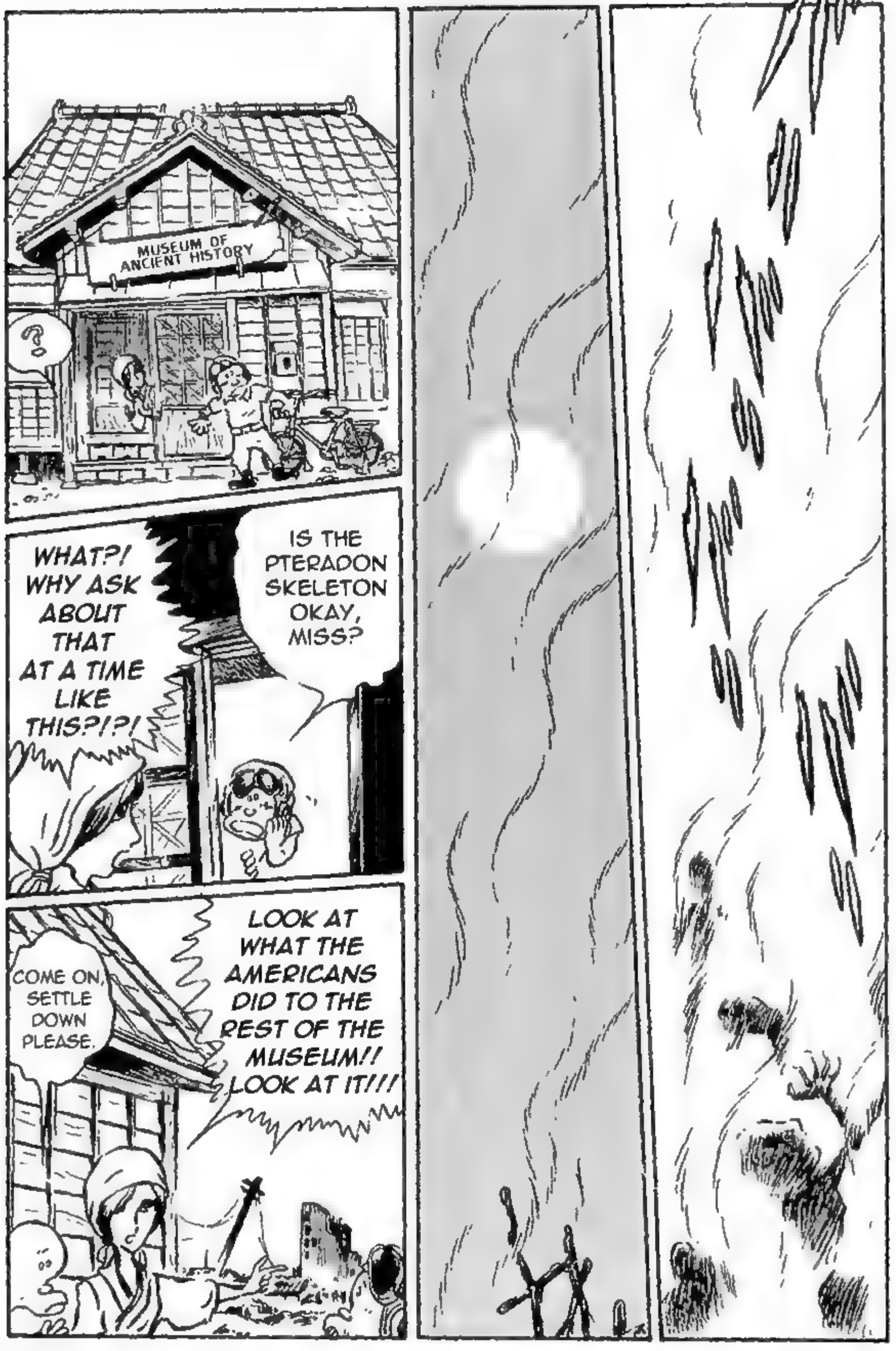


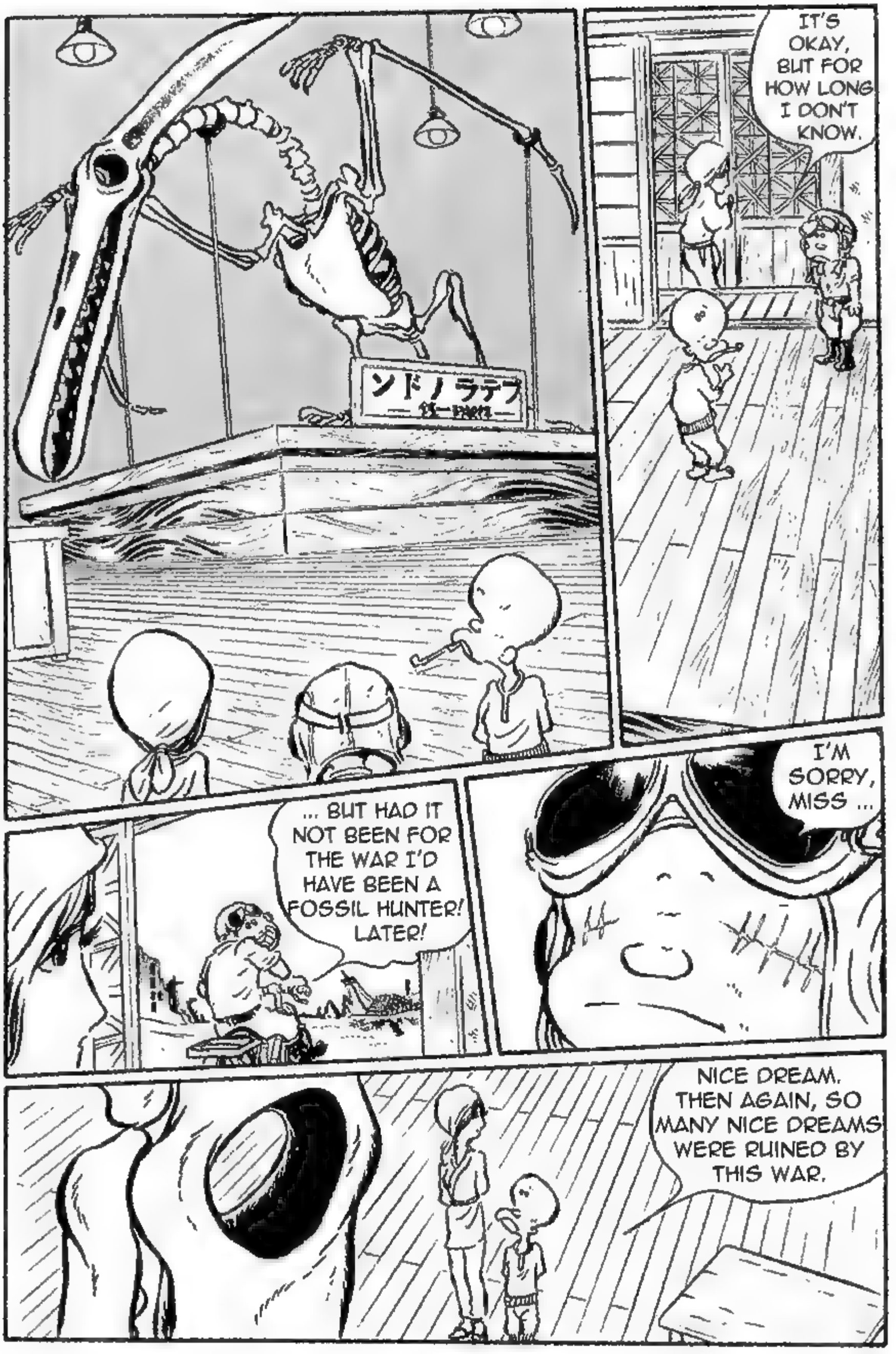
GOD BUT THIS IS SO EASY! NOT LIKE EARLIER IN THE WAR!! THEY CAN BARELY TOUCH US!!!

THEIR AA BATTERIES CAN'T FIRE HIGH ENOUGH AND WHAT HIGH ALTITUDE FIGHTERS THEY HAVE DON'T DO VERY WELL GIVEN HOW HIGH WE FLY!

D.B.FRANGELAR

NOW LET'S CARPET BOMB EVERY LAST ONE OF THE LITTLE YELLOW MUTHERFUCKERS BACK TO THE STONE AGE!


MUSEUM OF ANCIENT HISTORY
?
WHAT?! WHY ASK ABOUT THAT AT A TIME LIKE THIS?!?!
IS THE PTERADON SKELETON OKAY, MISS?
COME ON, SETTLE DOWN PLEASE.
LOOK AT WHAT THE AMERICANS DID TO THE REST OF THE MUSEUM!! LOOK AT IT!!!


IT'S OKAY, BUT FOR HOW LONG I DON'T KNOW.
I'M SORRY, MISS ...
... BUT HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE WAR I'D HAVE BEEN A FOSSIL HUNTER! LATER!
NICE DREAM. THEN AGAIN, SO MANY NICE DREAMS WERE RUINED BY THIS WAR.

WE CAN'T SAVE IT, YOU KNOW. IF AN AMERICAN BOMB EVER HITS THIS PLACE THEN THIS MAGNIFICENT SPECIMEN WILL BE DESTROYED.
IF I EVER SEE AN AMERICAN AND I HAVE THE MEANS THEN I'M GOING TO KILL HIM.
YOU DO THAT. I'M GETTING SOME SLEEP. DIDN'T SLEEP WELL LAST NIGHT ....
CAN I HAVE SECONDS?
FRANGELAR'S BEEN A MAN OBSESSED EVER SINCE WE STARTED BOMBING TOKYO LATE LAST YEAR.
YEAH. HE LIKES DOING IT TOO MUCH. HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW LITTLE HE SLEEPS AND HOW MUCH HE EATS?

HE'S PATHETIC IF YOU ASK ME. ALL HE LIVES FOR IS KILLING JAPS.

A REAL BOMBER PILOT DOESN'T OBSESS HIMSELF WITH KILLING ALL CIVILIANS IN HIS WAY.

IS THAT ANY DIFFERENT THAN WHAT WE AND THE BRITISH DID TO GERMANY EARLIER IN THE WAR?

DON'T FORGET WHAT THEY DID TO WARSAW, LONDON, AND MANY OTHER CITIES. IF YOU ASK ME ALL OF US ON BOTH SIDES ARE MASS MURDERERS.

AND DON'T FORGET ALL THE SHIT THE JAPS HAVE BEEN DOING IN SPADES OVER HERE.

NANKING, PEARL HARBOR, THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH, AND MORE! NEVER FORGET THOSE, GENTS!

MASS MURDERERS? NO! WE'RE TRYING TO STOP THE REAL MASS MURDERERS, THE FUCKING JAPANESE!!

AND I FOR ONE AM NOT GOING TO STOP UNTIL I BOMB THE SHIT OUT OF EVERY FUCKING LAST ONE OF 'EM!!

NO. I'M STAYING HERE.

IT'S NO GOOD! WE CAN'T SAVE ANYTHING! GO SAVE YOURSELF!

I WILL PROTECT THIS PLACE FOR AS LONG AS I CAN.

ALL RIGHT! WE'LL START AT THE EDGE OF THE CITY AND CARPET BOMB IN TURN UNTIL THERE'S FUCKING NOTHING LEFT!!!

D.B.FRANGELAR

WUSSIES! THE SMELL OF BARBECUED JAP MAKES MY DAY! AHHHH, ISN'T THAT EXHILARATING!

THE REST OF US ARE ON THE VERGE OF THROWING UP.

I HOPE YOU'RE ENJOYING THE STENCH, CAPTAIN FRANGLER.

WHAT A PLEASANTLY WONDERFUL SMELL!

THEY'RE HITTING EVERY WARD, EVEN THE RESIDENTIAL ONES! WHAT FIENDS!!

THIS TIME I'LL DO THE JOB RIGHT!!!

SO IT'S YOU AGAIN! THAT EXPLAINS THE CARNAGE! I THOUGHT I SHOT YOU DOWN TWO YEARS AGO!

BANZAI!!!

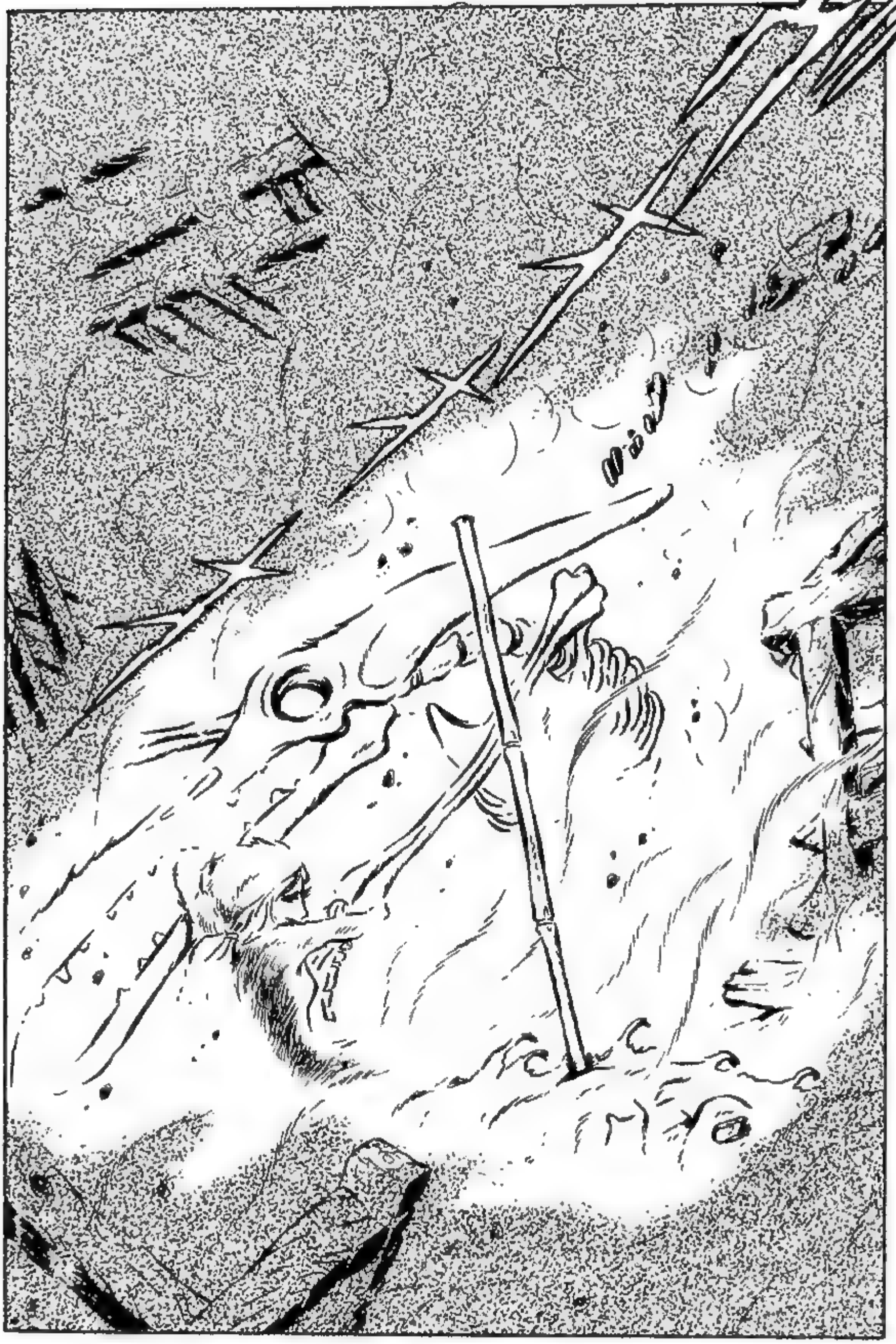
MOTHER FUCKER!

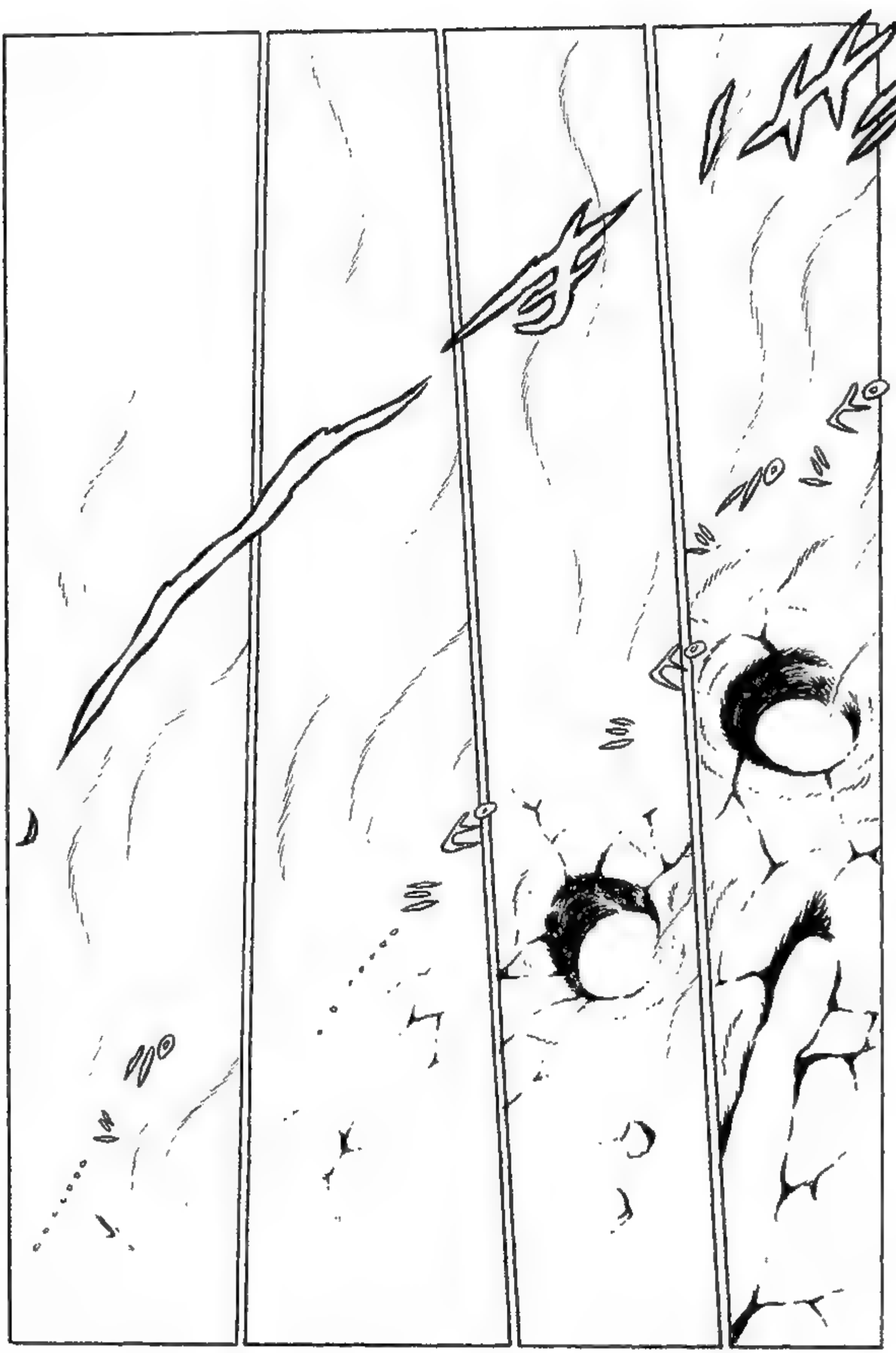
WHAT THE FUCK?!

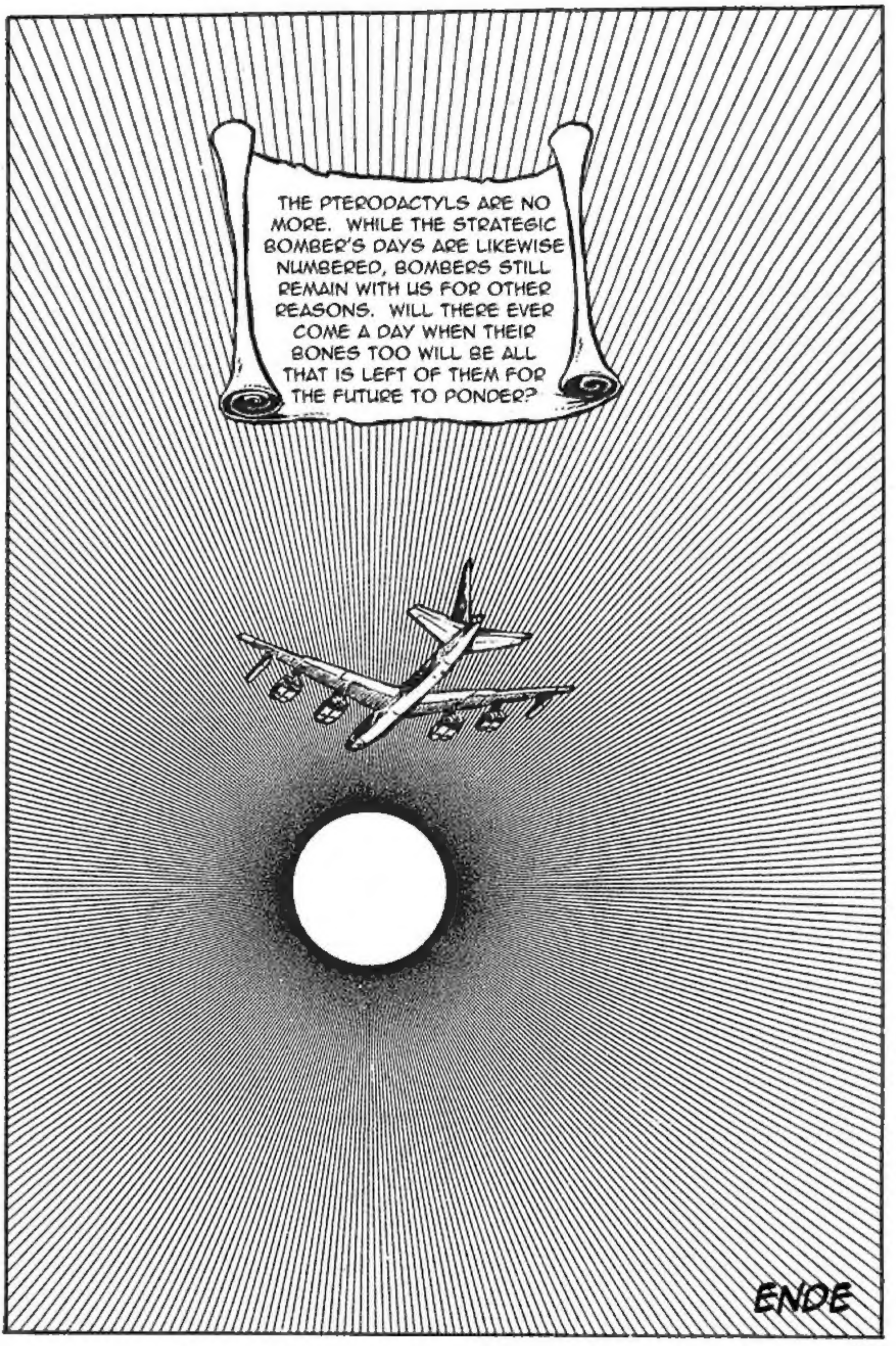
AS THESE OLD BONES BURN, AND AS MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS BURN, SO TOO WILL YOUR BODY BURN!

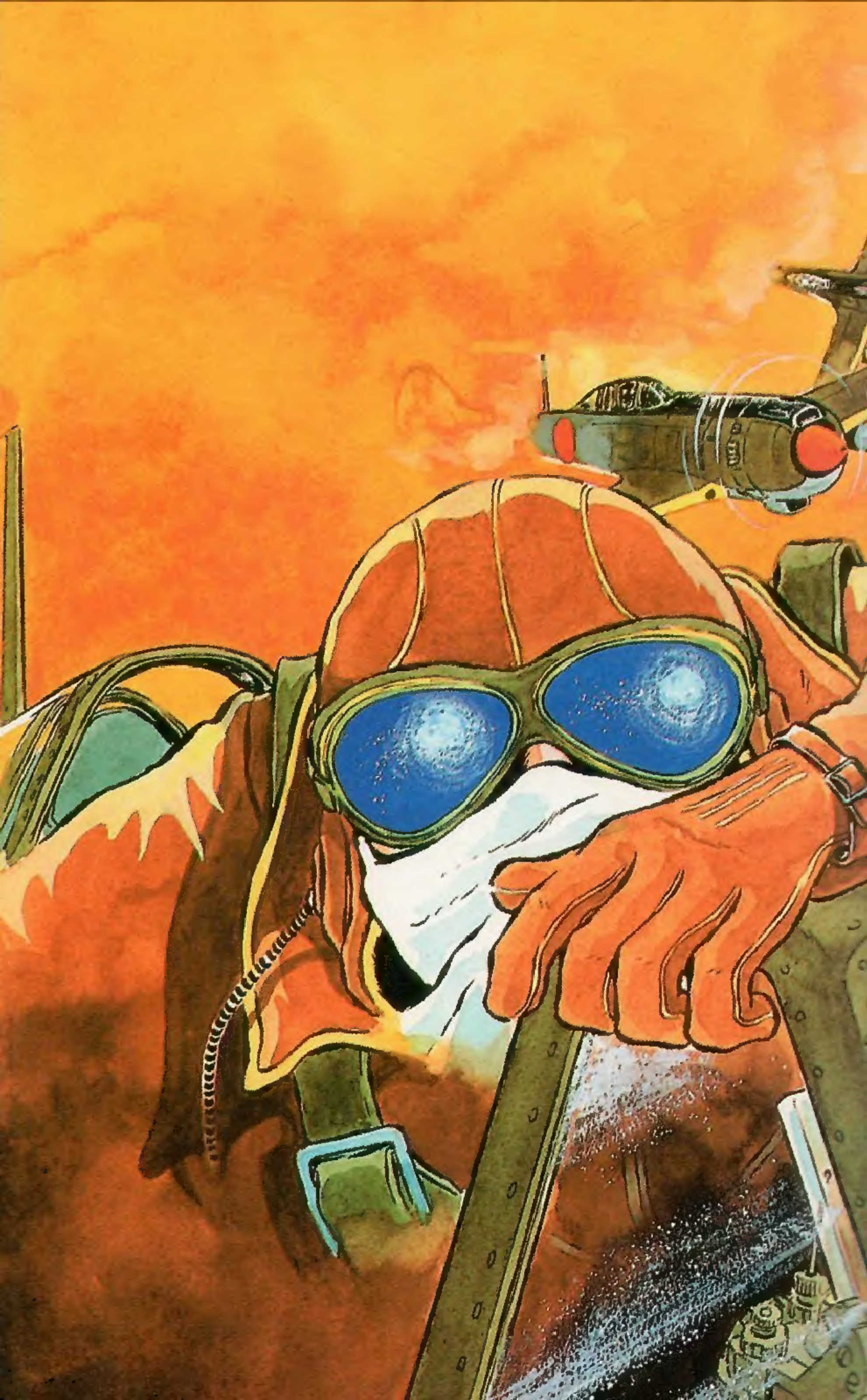
DIE

YANK!!






THE PTERODACTYLS ARE NO MORE. WHILE THE STRATEGIC BOMBER'S DAYS ARE LIKEWISE NUMBERED, BOMBERS STILL REMAIN WITH US FOR OTHER REASONS. WILL THERE EVER COME A DAY WHEN THEIR BONES TOO WILL BE ALL THAT IS LEFT OF THEM FOR THE FUTURE TO PONDER?
ENDE

(Published in Big Comic Original, February 20, 1978 issue)

THE AGE OF THE PTERODACTYL